

LOOKOUT!

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THE MAN ON THE HORSE: "Ollie-Mania" and the Emerging Threat of Fascism in America

When Ronald Reagan first ascended to the Presidency, some of the more paranoid commentators, myself included, were quick to proclaim that the United States was on the verge of being transformed into the Fourth Reich.

The only thing lacking in this analysis was that Reagan, for all his myriad faults, was no Hitler. After he'd been in office a few months, I started seeing him more as Hindenburg, the senile postwar Chancellor who presided over the collapse of the Weimar Republic and then attempted to salvage things by asking Hitler to form a government.

There are parallels. The German economy was in ruins throughout most of the 1920s, primarily because the inequitable settlement imposed on it by the American-backed allies following World War I. It became common in some circles to blame Germany's defeat on civilian leaders who had allegedly prevented the military from winning the war. And a substantial minority of the German people became enthralled with the idea that their country should return to the fundamental values that had allegedly once made Germany great.

The precarious state of the US economy is not so obvious as were the waves of hyperinflation and depression that wracked Germany during the Weimar period. But all the ingredients are there; a couple of major bank failures or a few more defaulting third world countries could send us over the brink.

As Vietnam vanishes further into the collective memory hole, a revisionist view of that monumentally stupid war has also started to take hold. It started with the innocuous-sounding proposition that we should honor the soldiers who fought the war regardless of whether it was right or wrong, and quickly degenerated into the *Rambo*-fueled myths that our brave fighting men could have easily wiped up the jungle with those commies had their efforts not been sabotaged by cowardly and venal politicians.

America's much-ballyhooed longing for a return to "traditional" values has been encouraged and exploited by the radical right and its religious allies, but it could never have attained the degree of credibility it has without the whole-hearted complicity of the mass information industry. That includes but is certainly not limited to the news media. Movies, television, and popular music probably have a much greater impact on people's thinking than the heavily managed and thoroughly predictable news given them by government-controlled networks.

The current resurgence of militarism is due in no small part to profoundly fascist movies like *Top Gun*, which attempt to make visual poetry out of the instruments of mass murder. The effect is more subtle, and more entertaining, but no less mind-numbing and poisonous than Leni Riefenstahl's Hitlerian documentaries. This sort of "art" aims not at illuminating the darker corners of the human spirit, but rather at rousing the beasts that dwell there.

There is an innate human tendency to derive pleasure from the wielding of power and the ability, whether acted upon or not, to inflict fear and pain. Anyone who doubts this should observe groups of children at play. Fortunately most of us outgrow this to some extent, or at least are able to learn that there are more satisfying ways to relate to one another.

But just as an individual can, in response to stressful or extraordinary conditions, become unbalanced, so can whole communities or nations. The nightmare of the Third Reich is merely the most vivid example of recent times, but we can just as easily point to France under Napoleon, or "Christian" Europe during the time of the Crusades, or the legions of Julius Caesar or Alexander.

This will no doubt strike some as an outrageous form of historical revisionism; while Hitler has by consensus been made a madman, Napoleon and others of his ilk are held up in schools as "great" leaders and military geniuses. It is possible that Hitler will one day attain similar status, in fact it is likely unless we finally learn to assign the same moral reprehensibility to acts of murder and robbery committed by organized groups that we do to those committed by individuals.

But it is a lesson that has not yet been learned, as the Oliver North affair frighteningly demonstrates. Here is a man who freely admits to lying and stealing with the ultimate purpose of assisting a thoroughly corrupt mob of right-wing killers, terrorists, and drug dealers. If judged by the standards which you and I live under, he and his superiors, Ronald Reagan foremost among them, would be in prison for the rest of their lives. Instead we see ostensibly rational citizens calling for this self-confessed criminal to be our next president.

Are Americans so frightened by the specter of communism, so ignorant of the realities of global politics, so frustrated with the perceived weaknesses of the democratic system that they would be willing to throw away all the slow and painful progress this country has made toward some semblance

of freedom for a brief illusion of tragic and destructive glory? Democracy will be fortunate enough to survive the malign incompetence of Ronald Reagan; it wouldn't have a prayer under the blatant fascism of an Oliver North.

Yes, fascist is an overused word, to the extent that it risks losing much of its terrible impact. But if ever a figure has emerged in modern American political life who merits that title, it must be Oliver North. His appeal to the worst possible instincts of the American people and his sneering contempt for the basic human rights of anyone who gets in the way of his militaristic and fanatic vision for the world ought to be familiar to anyone vaguely familiar with history; his words and manner are virtually interchangeable with those of dictators throughout the centuries.

Even if North vanishes from the political stage as quickly as he burst upon it, even if he is consigned to the jail cell he so richly deserves, the damage he has already done will not be easily remedied. The outpouring of support he received, wholeheartedly encouraged by the increasingly right-wing mass media, will not go unnoticed by any number of would-be tyrants. And let it not be forgotten that Hitler himself served time in prison for crimes against the same state that he was later to lead into a frenzy of mass murder and self-destruction.

People don't like to think about what might have possessed the German nation to follow what appears in retrospect so obvious a recipe for disaster. They prefer to fix blame on some clearly demented leaders and shrug the Third Reich off as a historical anomaly. To admit that the highly civilized and cultured German people could have freely chosen such a course suggests too clearly that people anywhere might do the same.

And that of course is precisely the legacy of Oliver North. With his boyish grin and his swaggering sense of bravado he has stirred at least a significant minority of Americans into a readiness to throw out the Constitution and embark on a course of world domination by brute force. It shouldn't be surprising to find such tendencies embedded in our national character, but it is deeply disturbing. The man on the horse is an ancient symbol for the powerful leader who lulls us into discarding our individual consciences and abdicating responsibility for our collective actions. If Oliver North himself is not that man, he has blazed a broad and inviting trail for him.

HARMONICAS TO BRING ABOUT WORLD PEACE

Sproutheads, nature worshippers, vegan witches, and punk rock mystics from all over the world will be gathering Sunday, August 16 to rustle up some good vibes which are allegedly going to bring about world peace, end hunger, and produce a cure for AIDS.

This is going to happen by means of the "Harmonica Convergence," and it works like this: everyone is going to bring a harmonica to a pre-designated meeting place -- in San Francisco it's Bound Together Books at 1369 Haight Street -- and at the appointed hour -- probably noon or shortly after -- they all start playing on the mouth organ until the Age of Aquarius (didn't this already happen back in 1969 or something?) is ushered in and all the world's problems go shuffling off stage. Sounds like a great racket, anyway.

Oooops... I've just been informed that I was misinformed, that there aren't supposed to be any harmonicas after all, that it's a *harmonic* convergence, whatever that means. Well, as Gilda Radner used to say on *Saturday Night Live*, never mind. I suggest that if you're going to show up you bring your harmonicas anyway, the better to drown out the New Age windbags. Meanwhile I'm working on organizing next year's electric guitar convergence.

Back Home in Mendocino...

From most accounts Mendocino County is this year suffering its worst assault yet by the paramilitary Campaign Against Marijuana Planting. CAMP, which seems to be steadily evolving into a domestic version of the Nicaraguan contras, has abandoned all pretense of following rules and guideline set down in response to hundreds of citizen complaints. Helicopters, which are supposed to only be used to ferry men into areas for raids, are being used for reconnaissance, hovering at treetop and housetop level until they see something of interest, and then landing and looting without benefit of warrants. This year's program has received almost no attention from the mass media.

At the same time, the current state of the marijuana market belies CAMP's assertions that they were successful in destroying the bulk of last year's crop. It was generally assumed that this was true because pot prices had skyrocketed to unprecedented levels almost immediately after the 1986 harvest. But it now appears that this may have been due more to hoarding on the part of farmers anticipating late summer shortages; the price per pound seems to have remained relatively stable since late winter/early spring. Another factor may be the flood of cheap foreign imports from South America and Asia, as well as the fact that people are discovering that sinsemilla can be grown just about as well in many other places besides California. Holland, for example, has a burgeoning marijuana industry, largely launched by California expatriates with California seeds; because of the relative lack of police harassment there, they are now producing pot similar to Mendocino and Humboldt's finest for roughly \$2000 a pound.

On a related subject, when the police and mass media began their propaganda assault against the pot-growing industry in an attempt to build up public support for the blatantly unconstitutional CAMP program, one of the charges they made was that marijuana growers were guilty of killing wild animals, particularly deer, to protect their crops.

Now it comes out that the North Coast's other outlaw agriculturalists, the big logging companies, have all along been slaughtering, at taxpayer expense, no less, large numbers of bears to protect their crops. 45 of the furry brown creatures have already bitten the dust so far this year because of their taste for the bark of young redwood trees.

There are of course no end of examples of the double standards used to excuse one type of farming and condemn another. No matter what environmental depredations, no matter how badly its employees are exploited, no matter how disastrous the long-term effects on the region's economy, whatever big timber does is forgivable because it creates jobs. Yet at the same time marijuana probably creates more jobs, most of the income it produces stays in the area rather than being funneled off into the pockets of absentee shareholders, and the effects on the environment are minuscule by comparison. And it is a fully renewable form of agriculture as opposed to the cut-and-run strategy of Louisiana-Pacific and its ilk.

Pot foes will of course claim that the true environmental damage effected by the evil weed takes place in the minds of its consumers. Aside from the fact that through all these years of anti-drug hysteria no reliable scientific evidence has yet been produced in support of that claim, an equally important point is that anyone damaging him or herself through marijuana abuse does so by choice. No choice is afforded those who must eat, breathe, and drink the chemical fallout of highly irresponsible logging practices, or inhabit a landscape largely stripped of its natural forests.

Controversy continues to swirl over the eco-defense strategy of tree-spiking. During the spring a Louisiana-Pacific worker was seriously injured when a spiked tree shattered a sawmill blade. Reaction was quick and predictable; tree-spikers were "terrorists" and the solution to the problem was new and stricter laws.

It's a difficult issue. I don't want to see anyone hurt, regardless of who they work for. I also don't want to see all of us hurt by the callous butchery of our forest lands by irresponsible corporate criminals like L-P and Maxxam. It has been suggested that had L-P been following the prescribed safety procedures, their worker wouldn't have been hurt when the spike hit the fan. I have no way of knowing whether that's true, but given the likelihood that tree-spiking will continue and probably increase, it might be wise of workers to insist that their company take the necessary precautions to protect them. It's also (I think) incumbent on workers to demand some input into what and how much timber should be cut. Not only out of respect for the land and future generations, but out of simple self-interest; if all the trees are gone, there will be no more logging jobs. Simple as that.

Anyway, I'm told that there is a solution to the problem. Supposedly the book *Eco-Defense* gives instruction on how to use clay spikes which wear down sawmill blades but don't shatter them. *Eco-Defense* comes highly recommended and is sold through the mail by the Earth First! people. Unfortunately I don't have an address for them handy, although a long-ago issue of the LOOKOUT did carry an ad for the book.

Something There Is That Doesn't Love a Wall...

From my window I can see nothing but East Berlin. If for some reason I were to exit via the window into the river below; I would be in East Berlin.

I am not likely to do this for a variety of reasons, the most obvious being that we are on the sixth floor. But an equally compelling one is that the border guards have supposedly been known to shoot people who ventured into the murky waters of the Spree. Fishing from the banks is allowed, but swimming, even on these stifling midsummer days, is absolutely *verboten*.

On the opposite bank, at a distance of perhaps 50 meters, is the Wall. Anywhere that West Berliners can get at it, it has been elaborately decorated with art and graffiti, but here it is a pristine -- perhaps a better word would be antiseptic -- white. In front of it are two barbed wire fences, and between them a barren no-man's land, reputedly heavily mined. At frequent intervals are watchtowers manned by *Volkspolizei* -- the People's Police -- armed with machine guns.

Berlin is an enormous sprawling city, but somehow it seems that the Wall is never far away. That is especially true here in Kreuzberg, where directions are often given along the lines of, "Straight ahead till you get to the Wall and then keep right."

Kreuzberg is a city unto itself, and its image is quite unlike the one Berlin is trying to present to the world in this, its 750th anniversary year. Bounded on two sides by East Berlin, it is home to much of the city's Turkish population, and among its European inhabitants, the artsy-punkish look is more the norm than the exception. Hardly a building is without its quota of graffiti, the bars are open all night, and on warm summer evenings, hundreds of what the east bloc press might call "anti-social elements" lounge about the sidewalks and doorways, listening to music, drinking beer, and casually tossing their empties into the street. The police drive through, but seldom stop; even a minor provocation might escalate into a rerun of the heavy-duty rioting that swept the quarter in early May.

Kreuzberg is off limits to American soldiers, though their helicopters and planes regularly perform maneuvers just over the roof tops. In other parts of the city one doesn't go far without seeing a radar tower or a barracks or a convoy. Forty-two years after the fall of the Third Reich, Berlin is still an occupied city, and there is nothing to suggest a change in that situation anytime soon. The Americans, British, and French divide the western sector; the east is, of course, Russian. Each nationality has its own radio station, its own shopping and recreation facilities, and it's quite possible for a foreigner to spend years here without ever speaking a word of German. Many of the troops do just that, something the locals find less than endearing.

For once, surprisingly enough, the Americans do not appear to be the most disliked. Consensus gives that honor to the British, whose ranks contain significant numbers of neo-fascist National Front supporters. The Russians are not out to win any popularity contests either, but they are seen on this side of the wall only in small numbers and in the role of tourists.

But what is it like for the Berliners, to live in what is essentially an artificial enclave, in a city that in a very real sense belongs neither to east or west? This actually isn't so true of East Berlin, which serves as capital of the German Democratic Republic. But West Berliners routinely speak of West Germany as though it were a separate country. Some West German laws do not apply or are not enforced in Berlin; perhaps most notably, West Berliners are exempt from military conscription, which can hardly discourage young people from flocking here.

Most West Berliners will tell you that they don't give a whole lot of thought to the Wall, that it's been there so long that it's just become one of those facts of life that one doesn't think about anymore. With very little prompting, in fact, they will often spend the better part of an hour explaining to you how little it means.

They'll also explain to you what the East is like. Everything is grey, the buildings, the people, the food... One could even get the impression that the weather, nothing to write home about in most of northern Europe, takes a sudden turn for the worse the moment one crosses the Wall.

From my window I can see that they're right about the drabness of the cityscape; East Berlin is one of the most resolutely ugly places I have ever encountered. But then much of West Berlin is no beauty spot, either. The majority of the city has been rebuilt from the ground up since World War II, and the primary esthetic appears to have been one of pragmatism. The typical building, East or West, is a box-shaped apartment block, finished with a dirty grey stucco-like material.

There are streets, though, that the war managed to miss, and some of them are simply magnificent. Most impressive is the scale of things, as if the city had been constructed for a race of giants. Sidewalks are as wide as streets, doorways look better suited for Roman temples than low-rent tenements, and the 10 to 12-foot ceilings and five or six floors of the average building combine to make the visitor feel positively antlike.

I came to Berlin with a carload of punk rockers on their way to, believe it or not, a punk rock football (soccer) tournament. The trip from Augsburg in southern Germany covered about the same distance as the Los Angeles-San Francisco commute, but proved to be a bit more arduous.

Not the first half; the West Germany freeways are probably the best in the world, and ditto for their cars. It's possible to comfortably cruise at 100 mph and still be passed by scores of high-power Mercedes and BMWs. But then you come to the border. Even if you have no interest whatsoever in visiting East Germany, merely want to drive straight through to Berlin, you have to endure a customs ritual that can take anywhere from 20 minutes to several hours, depending on the traffic and the mood of the border guards.

At the West German checkpoint they merely examine your passport and run your name through a computer, but then you come to no less than three East German barriers. At each one some of the grimmest-looking Gestapo types to crawl out of a bad war movie spend a very long minute or two comparing each and every facial feature of each and every passenger in the car to those portrayed in his or her passport photos. So penetrating a stare do they use for this examination that a person might seriously begin to question his or her own identity. The guards have a standardized method, apparently taught in customs-agent school, of swivelling their gaze back and forth between the passport and its owner; you can almost hear their eyeballs click.

As you proceed from one step to another, you're traversing several hundred yards of land which produces nothing more fruitful than barbed wire and watch towers. The effect is that of a hideous open wound gouged out of the side of the planet. Through the whole maddening process, through the whole horrific landscape, I felt like screaming out at these automaton humans, something like what Jim Morrison and the Doors once demanded:

What have they done to the earth?
What have they done to our fair sister?
Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her,
Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn,
Tied her with fences and dragged her down...

But dialogue is not encouraged, nor is snickering and silliness. You do your best to look serious and respectful, as if this pious rigamarole were a perfectly normal and sensible way for people to be behaving toward one another. And the ordeal is not over when you're finally waved past the last crossing.

The East German portion of the Berlin route is meant to be a freeway, but for nearly half of its 150 miles semi-permanent road repairs have narrowed it to a single lane in each direction, with no passing allowed. Speed limits at times drop as low as 36 mph and are strictly enforced (at the cost of \$10 per excess mile, payable on the spot) by radar units hidden under military

camouflage netting. For West Germans, accustomed to no speed limits and near subsonic rates of automobile travel, this is cruel torture indeed.

The road skirts only a few towns along the way. We're crossing by night, so there's virtually nothing to see except for the semi-spectacular lightning show on the eastern horizon ("artillery fire?" asks one passenger). There are periodic exits to places with mysterious sounding names, but we're not allowed to take any of them. On the side of the highway are long lines of stopped East German cars. Smaller even than Japanese sub-compacts and looking about as substantial as recycled cookie-cutters, I'm told these three-cylinder beauties have to stop periodically to allow their engines to cool down. They're also not supposed to run too well in the rain.

After four hours the whole border ritual begins again. At two a.m. there's not too much traffic clogging up the works for us, though cars leaving Berlin are still lined up for three or four miles. Once into the western sector, the first people we see are American soldiers, lots of them. Then we're meandering about through some suburban forests while the driver and his navigator jabber at each other in rapid-fire German. I assume we're searching for the friend's house where we're supposed to sleep, but I'm proved wrong when, after a half dozen circuits of an American radar installation that looks recently transplanted from Mars, we pull up alongside a deserted field.

Next comes 15 minutes of aimless tramping about in the dark, swatting mosquitos and wondering what the hell is going on. Then we hear a voice calling from the woods. Someone emerges, greetings are exchanged, and the wandering continues.

Finally, way off in the distance, we hear the sound of a cassette player. We follow it until, on top of a small hill roughly equidistant from the radar farm and the floodlit barbed wire marking the approach to the border, there's a punk rock beer party going full blast. With my limited German conversational skills and my even more limited fondness for warm German beer, I felt a bit out of it. Fortunately, just as the sky was getting light it started to rain and we adjourned to a nearby apartment.

I finally got to sleep about 5:30 in the morning; the Germans carried on drinking and shouting and were still at it when I woke up at 11. The light rain had become a downpour, and at least, I thought, we could forget about this ridiculous idea of a football tournament.

Evidently I still have something to learn about Germans, because at noon I find myself being herded into a car and driven to an athletic field. Being a dumb American who refuses to admit knowing the first thing about European football, I get to cower on the sidelines with the women with a windblown tarpaulin affording us partial shelter. The men, who have neither slept nor stopped drinking in 24 hours, strip down to T-shirts and shorts and play furious football, slipping and sliding on the saturated pitch like hydroplaning motorboats. I begin to understand why Germans persist in starting wars and also why they usually end up losing them.

The games over, we have a couple hours rest before the evening's event, a punk concert that is if anything, more brutal than the football matches, both in terms of alcohol consumption and physical contact. Many of the musicians were the same nuts, I mean athletes, that I'd seen that afternoon.

We're in Kreuzberg now, in the basement of four or five story building that was once used for institutional purposes but was taken over by squatters back in hippie days and is still in their hands. It's about five feet from the Wall. Nearby someone has erected a wooden ladder leading to a small platform from which it's possible to look over the Wall at a slice of life on the other side. There are streetcars and buses going by, an East Berlin punk rocker strolls past a street lamp, drinking a beer and singing, an old lady looks out her window to see what the racket is about.

There must be something very compelling about over-the-Wall viewing. During the next week, no matter what time of day or night I would pass by, the platform was nearly always occupied by Berliners and/or tourists, smoking hash, drinking beer, or simply staring. They often call or wave to people on the other side, but I never saw an East Berliner respond.

After several days of looking at and thinking and talking about the Wall, it came time to make the crossing myself. I was lucky to have a guide who spoke fluent German and English; most young East Berliners are also bilingual, but their second language

tends to be Russian. David is American by birth, but has spent the last seven of his 25 years in Berlin. He runs his own record company and sings with one of Berlin's leading punk bands. A while back his group tried to stage a guerilla concert in the east; after two songs the police showed up and David and his mates had to clamber through the windows and run for it.

We go under the Berlin Wall, arriving by subway. The security here is a little more relaxed, involving only two checkpoints and about 15 minutes. Since I'm supposedly the more respectable looking, I'm accorded the honor of carrying the contraband across the border. It consists of nothing more subversive than stickers and flyers advertising western bands, and while not specifically illegal, would almost certainly be confiscated if it were discovered.

Downtown there are some remarkable old buildings that survived World War II saturation bombings, interspersed with some fairly pedestrian modern ones. Unter den Linden, the main boulevard, is packed with tourists, and there's not a Russian soldier in sight.

The first East German soldiers we encountered were standing perfectly motionless, rifles balanced on upturned palms, in front of an enormous mausoleum dedicated to the victims of fascism and militarism. We happened to have arrived just in time for the changing of the guard; the soldiers and their replacements did some fancy drill and marched off with a smart goose step, just like in the movies.

Then there was the German Historical Museum, which had impressively detailed exhibits on the rise of Nazism, including the details of how many of West Germany's leading corporations participated in and profited from it. A great deal of emphasis was placed on the role played by the Soviet Union in the liberation of Germany, but no mention of all was made of Stalin's peace pact with Hitler. And if Germany has had any history since 1945, it hasn't yet made it into this museum.

But enough for the tourist stuff; now it was time to go meet some East Berliners. We had to travel about half an hour on the subway; it wasn't much different from the one in West Berlin except that the fare was the equivalent of 12¢ as opposed to \$1.50. But none of the ticket machines worked; nor was there was anyone selling tickets. We went without; nobody seemed to take any notice.

Our friend was waiting for us on the platform. He spoke only very limited English, but he had managed, by hook and crook, to obtain a collection of American tapes, records, and magazines. So taken was he with American punk rock that he had renamed himself after Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra. When he was 17 he had made an abortive attempt to escape to West Berlin, and served a year in jail for his effort. Now he works as a manual laborer and has a wife and child. He's had an application in for some time now to emigrate to the West, but his wife doesn't want to go, and people knowledgeable in these matters tell me that he doesn't stand a chance of being allowed to go if it would mean leaving dependents behind.

Jello earns 1500 East German marks a month, about the same as he would get for a similar job in the West. But there's a difference; the rent on his large five-room flat is only 86 marks a month, and the other necessities of life are similarly priced. At the nearby restaurant the most expensive item on the menu is five marks; one could eat a huge meal and drink a couple of beers for the equivalent of two or three dollars.

But as I'm soon to learn, East Berliners don't just drink a couple of beers. In fact they are the only people I've met who can outdrink the West Berliners. By the time I've plowed through a large plate of some various dull-colored things that have been cooked long enough to render them nearly unrecognizable, Jello is on his seventh or eighth beer and David is not far behind.

There followed a round of bars and apartments; everywhere we went were bottles of the official beer, Berliner Pilsener, priced at about 25¢ apiece. At one point, during a discussion about how much to tip the waitress, Jello tossed a handful of marks across the table and onto the floor. "*Das ist Scheisse,*" he grunted, "This is shit."

And it might as well be; where the typical problem faced by westerners is getting enough money to buy all the things they want, it's not at all unusual for East Berliners like Jello to have more money than they know what to do with. He could buy a car, of course; that would soak up a couple years worth of his

earnings, but without connections in high places, there is a waiting list of about ten years. He can travel, but only to other east bloc countries like Bulgaria or the Soviet Union, where similar economic conditions hold sway. And Jello, because he has applied for permission to emigrate, is not even allowed to visit most other communist countries; their borders are more porous than East Germany's and he might be able to slip away into the west.

He can watch western television and listen to western radio, he can talk to his western friends on the telephone, he can even look across the Wall and see glimpses of the life that goes on there, but it's entirely possible that he will spend his entire life without ever being able to go there. And while this causes him no end of exasperation, I met at least half a dozen of his friends who don't seem particularly bothered by their situation. They earn good money at their jobs, they have comfortable places to live, their basic needs like health care and education for their children are guaranteed by the state. Freedom, the sort that western politicians are given to waxing rhapsodic about, is a mere abstraction. Life in the east is, they assure me, "nicht so schwer," not so hard.

Jello is not convinced; as the midnight deadline approaches when all westerners are supposed to be back on their side of the Wall, loud arguments continue and the beer is supplemented by vodka. David is right in the middle of the discussion, and it's all I can do to get him back to the station in time for the last train to central Berlin. Already we're going to have overstayed our day visas by at least half an hour and I have visions of experiencing an East German jail firsthand, or having to endure an all-night interrogation.

But the border guards don't even raise an eyebrow, except when David drunkenly admits that he has not spent all his East German marks. He's forced to go back and get rid of them, which he does by handing them to the first passerby he sees. This is not all that uncommon; West Berliners have been seen just tossing their unspent DDR marks into the trash. I keep quiet about mine, thinking that they will make good souvenirs.

Back in the west, everything is normal. We've missed the last U-Bahn, which means we have to hitchhike back to Kreuzberg. It's a warm summer night, one of the few that Berlin enjoys. In the apartment all the windows are open; we can hear the constant roar and grind of the East German factory that lies just across the river, and the periodic rumble of a passing guard boat. It's getting on past three in the morning, the time when a person is inclined to ask, as Dylan put it, "if it's him or them that's insane."

Or to put it another way, just what the hell is going on here? Here is one of the greatest cities in the world, the *Hauptstadt* of one of the greatest countries in the world, and it's torn apart, ripped into a mere fragment of what it could and should be by this monument of man's stupidity to man. It's easy, too easy, to blame it all on the East Germans or the Russians. The Wall is their creation, it's true. But one shouldn't forget that not all of their paranoia and xenophobia is unjustified; from the very beginning of the Russian revolution, the capitalist countries have done everything in their power to sabotage the communist attempt to create a new and more egalitarian order. If Marxism had been allowed to develop freely, would things have ever gotten to this ridiculous and tragic state? Or would the only result be that more of us would be living inside the Wall?

The distrust, competitiveness, and outright hatred that characterizes so much of global geo-politics have guaranteed that we will never know the answer to that question. The best we can hope for now is a gentle erosion of the Wall, to be achieved by the kind of communication that helps people on both sides to see that their mutual interests have little or nothing to do with those of the rulers who have brought them to this lovely place.

For every rotten thing you've heard about East Germany and the whole Soviet bloc -- and make no mistake, most of the rotten things you've heard are true -- a typical East Berliner can come right back with some equally rotten truths about America. They know about Nicaragua and El Salvador, about the genocide this country was founded upon, about the millions of people who sleep in the streets of the richest country in the history of the world. Not all of them want to see the Wall torn down; some of them see a distinct advantage to keeping our supposedly superior culture the hell out of their country.

In other words, there are communists just as conservative as Ronald Reagan or Jerry Falwell; the outrageous thing is that those on opposing sides of the Wall who are prepared to incinerate the planet over minor differences in economic theory have as much in common with each other as those of us who dream of the day when all walls and borders will be only a distant and ugly memory. Walls are ultimately raised only in our hearts and minds, and ultimately that is where they will be torn down. All walls are also only illusions, and illusions serve only one of two purposes: to make us wise or to destroy us.

LETTERS TO THE LOOKOUT

Dear Sir:

Now that you are the owner and publisher of California's prestigious monthly the LOOKOUT I for one object to your extended vacations.

Are you going to fire a salvo against the intended visit of the Pope who will visit here at the taxpayers' expense? I sure as hell don't want my money spent, or rather wasted in this fashion. We need him like a hole in the head.

Sincerely,
Dennis
Campbell CA

Dear Mr. Livermore,

iH woh era uoy? Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA!!! Just in case you're wondering who this is... it's me! Devon! I thought that while you were out of the country, I would take this opportunity to harass you. I see it this way, either this will be the only letter you got while you were away and will make you feel bad that you even came back. Or... this will be the last letter you read after opening piles of letters containing money and messages of love and praise from all your ardent fans, and this will cause you to yell and scream as you pull your hair out and pound your face onto the cold, slick, shiny, surface of your kitchen's linoleum floor. By now you must be going, "Why me, why me?"... The reason being WAJLEMAC fanzine wants to interview you! Yes, you and your lovely LOOKOUTS! So just either try to lay low and avoid us or face it like a man and tell us when we can interrogate you!

Oh yeh, since you were gone, me and Dave got our band BOO! HISS! PFFFT! WHY DON'T WE THROW SOME TOMATOES AT THOSE GUYS? off the ground. Well, that's it,

Later dude
Devon Morf
WAJLEMAC fanzine
Mill Valley CA

Dear Devon:

What makes you think my kitchen linoleum would ever be shiny?

LL

Dear Lawrence:

If you are leaving for a three months vacation then this may not reach you before your return. However you could no doubt use it in your August issue of the LOOKOUT - an appropriate time as the troops will be in the fields and woods in August... Of course you may already have received this little masterpiece of mindlessness from someone else. I hope it is in many hands this season.

"It's a public document, nothing confidential about it," states Kathy Corsault, Public Information Officer, Division of Law Enforcement, California Attorney General's Office, in reply to questioning by the COUNTRY ACTIVIST (Redway CA). She explained that when the summer work was over "people got together to commemorate the season." Apparently the certificates are given out to everyone AND the signatures are real. Otherwise said, this is no joke. It is for real.

When the COUNTRY ACTIVIST, tried to obtain more info from the Attorney General's office via Jack Beecham, they were unsuccessful. "Beecham didn't return my three phone calls," states the ACTIVIST, and adds, "Pretty sick folks, huh?"

Or nitwits - or both.

And here's to wishing you the best of summers and with many thanks for the entertainment and information you provide me.

Sincerely
Ruth Douglas
Laytonville

Dear Ruth:

Yes, I have seen this corny certificate elsewhere, but it's worth reproducing here because it so adeptly illustrates the frighteningly puerile nature of those who by some dreadful miscarriage of all that is decent have been entrusted with the enforcement and manipulation of the laws of this state. I refer specifically of course to Mr. Van de Kamp himself, who has

the manner and morals of a schoolyard bully who also just happens to be the principal's son. I wonder also why it has been so quickly forgotten that when Van de Kamp's chief aide (and best friend) was arrested on child molesting charges (he was later acquitted, but on what sounded like dubious grounds), he was also found to be in possession of marijuana and a water pipe. Van de Kamp is of course not responsible for the actions of his friends, but it's hard to believe he could be completely ignorant about them, either.

LL

SINSEMILLA RAIDER

This certificate of honorable service is presented to:

You came and you were many, some of the finest law enforcement officers from the finest departments in the State of California. You came to cleanse this land of that green scourge known as "sinsemilla," used by some to warp the minds and hearts of the weak and wimpy in our society.

The campaign was a long one in which you suffered the slurs and abuse of an outraged populace too burnt out to be a viable part of America.

Your contributions were great. Possessed by a drive so strong that it's called "cannabinoid fever." You flew, drove, and marched into the great wilds of "big foot" country on a mission to destroy the "killer weed" before it destroys our civilization.

You are to be commended for winning a major battle in America's war on drugs. You accomplished these honorable deeds without losing your direction or becoming simply "Raiders of Lost Narcs." You love America and John Wayne would be proud of you.

You can now proudly state without reservation:

"WE KICKED THEIR BUDS"

John K. Van de Kamp
Attorney General

Dear Lawrence Livermore,

I wanted to congratulate you on the LOOKOUT as well as your column in MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL for May of 87. I picked up a copy of the LOOKOUT at the Gilman Street Warehouse the night the LOOKOUTS were introducing their record. Your zine and others I picked up indicate to me a real healthy use of the freedom of expression we are able to enjoy in these times. Just a few nickels in a copy machine arms us with material to affect and change the world around us. I have been involved in alternative publishing for many years and find it really exciting and positive that so many in the hardcore scene and political scene and so many others are taking advantage of the modern world! The copy companies themselves are subversives, whether they like it or not!

Tim Van Schmidt
Fort Collins CO

Dear Readers:

Unfortunately I've managed to lose a letter from John Bridgman of Edina MN challenging my statements about oil imports in LOOKOUT #26. I couldn't do a fair job of summarizing it except to say that it more or less alleges that I was full of shit (my words, not his). Anyway, I'm printing here my reply to him and his subsequent response. Hopefully you will be able to deduce the gist of his original arguments.

Dear John:

Since the next LOOKOUT won't be until 1 August, I figured I owed you a reply now. Yes, oil prices are (and should be) rising in the long term because of diminishing supplies. But the enormous run-up of the 1970s was also due in large part to the concerted efforts of OPEC and the Seven Sisters. If it were solely supply and demand, how would you explain the precipitous drop in prices during the 80s? As for nationalization, if the oil companies already own the countries doing the nationalizing, it doesn't make much difference, does it? If you have further comments, I'm afraid they'll have to wait for an answer, because I'm leaving on May 4.

LL

Dear LL:

Here are some responses: RE: your comment on the run-up. We were taught in logic to watch out for people who assert connections which are involved in phenomenon together. Yes, in anything involving oil you are sure to find that the Seven Sisters and OPEC are in the picture somewhere. How can they not be? So if anything goes on that's not nice, it is easy for demagogues and poor thinkers to assert responsibility. Well, no takers here. It's supply and demand that's behind high oil prices. There can be collusion, but collusion never works unless supply and demand help out. That's why those coffee and copper cartels never work; there's too much coffee and copper. But OPEC works because there's no oil. If there wasn't OPEC, oil would be just as high.

Regarding the 80s. First off, we have you accusing on both a rise in price and a decline in price. Your head must be pretty queer to be talking any change in oil prices as a bit of evidence that there is collusion. You point fingers when the price went up in the 70s, and then you point when it goes down. YEOWW!!

I've had economics, and I know that a small change in supply has a larger effect in price for non-substitutable goods. As a general rule, prices will double if supplies drop by 20% (no collusion; it's a natural occurrence).

In the 80s, you had the third world crapping out on the debt market. Unable to borrow, they were unable to buy the oil they had been buying. This decline in demand gave us more supplies at lower cost. As the dollar falls, oil will get expensive for us again (like way expensive).

It makes me very sad to see smart people falling for utter horseshit. The oil companies do not own the countries with the oil (Libya, for instance, which nationalized in 1970). The oil companies lost assets worth hundreds of billions of dollars when the oil fields were nationalized. Take the nationalized Saudi fields. The oil sold at \$19 per barrel by Saudi Arabia is totally at their disposal. I hate to be a prick in my arguing, but you

obviously hear things which appeal to you and you believe them and they are NOT TRUE.

John Bridgman
Edina MN

*And what they sell is their money -- you cannot show otherwise. If you go buy gasoline from Saudi Arabia for (whatever price), 50¢ per gallon goes to Saudi Arabia. **NO SHIT**. IT'S TRUE. Sorry, but true.

San Francisco Beat

Only a few months remain in the seemingly endless Feinstein era that saw more damage done to the City by the Bay than any other event since the earthquake and fire, but prospects for improvement on the political front are not bright.

John Molinari, frontrunner in the mayoral race, represents very little change from Feinstein's commitment to overdevelopment and the transformation of the City into a sterile corporate headquarters-cum-yuppie-Disneyland. His principal opponent, Art Agnos, is more in the Moscone tradition, though his business practices have on occasion raised both questions and eyebrows. Complicating things is the candidacy of Feinstein clone Louise Renne, who appears to be vying for the android vote (Renne also appears to believe that City voters are sufficiently lacking in intelligence as to be unable to deduce that a candidate who really "Isn't Backed by the Fat Cats" wouldn't be able to place billboards all over town proclaiming that fact. She may be right).

Then there's sometime newspaper columnist Warren Hinckle, who's the most exciting and refreshing mayoral candidate since Jello Biafra, and who probably has a roughly similar chance of winning. Hinckle shouldn't be underestimated, though, because his views do reflect those of many San Franciscans who feel that no politician comes even close to representing them, and also because none of the mainstream candidates has stirred up much passion among the voters.

One factor pointing to a Molinari win is the substantial percentage of the City's gay vote expected to go his way. Molinari has assiduously cultivated this crucial bloc by showing up at nearly every drag show and disco extravaganza in the past two years. The fact that he has managed to make such inroads by doing little more than the equivalent of kissing babies is merely one more piece of evidence that the homosexual community, once thought to be intrinsically left-wing or at least progressive, is just as prone to bourgeois values and unenlightened self-interest as its heterosexual counterpart.

But I've nearly given up on the prospect of reversing the City's decline through the normal political process. What could do the trick is an economic recession, hopefully one that would impact principally on the parasitic white-collar industries that have attracted the unmanageable hordes of insurance agents and marketing consultants who have devoured one neighborhood after another with their insatiable and inexorable blandness. A lovely stock market crash, that might do the trick... What the heck, even if it means the LOOKOUT's extensive portfolio would be wiped out... It'd be worth it to see all the brokers and real estate

speculators lined up in front of the General Assistance office (and they better not try taking cuts in front of my friends who have seniority).

On the subject of real estate speculators, I'm reminded of one notably offensive outfit going by the name of Skyline Realty. I was first made aware of the baleful influence exerted by this particular gang of geeks back in the early 1970s when they bought the building that housed our neighborhood liquor store and forced it out by means of the usual exponential rent increase. In exchange we got just what the community needed, another savings and loan.

Luckily Jug's Liquors was able to move into bigger and better quarters a few doors away, and things went merrily on their way for another 15 years. Until this year, when the long arm of Skyline Realty reached out and bought the rest of the block. Now Jug's is gone, the people who owned it are out of business, and several more people are out of jobs. It's not as if the neighborhood is going to have to go without alcohol; there's always Safeway across the street. But shopping at a corporate mega-store hardly compares to the feeling one gets at the corner store where clerks and customers know each others' names and often a good deal of each others' business.

Anyway, the former Jug's Liquors now sits vacant on Market Street between 14th and Church with a Skyline "For Rent" sign in the window, and if anyone wants rearrange the decor by means of a well-aimed brick or two, feel free to sign the LOOKOUTS name to it, too. In fact if you're feeling particularly energetic, Skyline's office is just across the street.

Even as she prepares to leave office, Mayor Feinstein is still pushing one of her favorite boondoggles, that of the so-called downtown baseball stadium. Candlestick Park, the minor disaster with which the City has been stuck since the early 1960s, was the result of some major-league wheeling and dealing which concerned itself only with the question of who could most profit from the sale of the land involved, and totally ignored the fact that said land was, because of prevailing weather conditions, among the most unsuitable sites possible for a summer sport like baseball.

Now Feinstein, claiming that she wants to rectify the mistake (or malfeasance) of her predecessor George Christopher, is doggedly trying to do much the same thing all over again. Her chosen site (and one which she has so stubbornly advocated that one has to suspect either she or hubby Dick has some financial interest in it) is at 7th and Townsend, which is about as downtown as the mayoral mansion out in Presidio Heights and which has been demonstrated to have weather conditions not significantly different from the legendarily awful Candlestick.

Those truly devoted to the idea of a downtown stadium (and unless you're an implacable baseball-hater, it does make a certain amount of sense) have of course long urged that the new sports palace be located at the conveniently vacant site at Third and Mission, which is not only really downtown, but within a couple blocks of nearly every public transit system in the Bay Area. But Feinstein, having already signed one of her sweetheart deals with a Canadian developer to build yet another luxury hotel there, claims it's quite impossible to rethink that arrangement.

So instead she's asking voters to approve something like an \$80 million bond issue to trade in one stadium with bad weather in the middle of nowhere for another one with similar weather and halfway between nowhere and almost somewhere. Personally, I wouldn't vote for it even if it were to be located at the logical downtown site because a city that can't afford to pay its welfare recipients enough to live on shouldn't be subsidizing a multi-million dollar business like the San Francisco Giants (who, if they'd ever win anything, would have no trouble filling Candlestick Park, anyway).

Donald Hodel, President Reagan's Secretary of Environmental Rape and Ruin, has shocked nearly everyone by proposing that the federal government drain the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in the Sierra Nevada to create a second valley in Yosemite National Park.

Hetch Hetchy is, of course, the source of San Francisco's drinking water, and the idea of draining an existing water project to restore it to its original condition seems entirely alien coming from a government that has devoted itself to hacking, chopping, poisoning, and paving over anything that doesn't move and quite a few things that do.

The damming of Hetch Hetchy at the turn of the century was considered an outrage by fledgling environmentalists, but as a cause long lost, reclamation of the valley was not high on most eco-activists' laundry lists; in fact, it's probably safe to say that little if any thought has been given to the idea in recent years. The concept is so out of sync with the whole nature of the Reagan administration that one has to suspect darker motives: perhaps someone has determined that huge deposits of gold or oil or uranium lie under the Hetch Hetchy valley floor.

At any rate, the City will still have to get its drinking water from somewhere, so if Hetch Hetchy goes, it just means another dam to be built elsewhere. Most likely that would be the Auburn Dam, which has been stalled for many years now by environmental concerns.

It's been ten years now since one of the City's more shameful episodes, the eviction of dozens of elderly and disabled tenants from the International Hotel and the subsequent demolition of the building. The resultant pit has been sitting there ever since, unused.

To commemorate this infamous event, a group of SF activists, including, among others, the brilliant writer Peter Plate, organized a theater piece to be performed on the site. Unfortunately Four Seas Corporation, the international consortium of greed who originally had the eviction carried out, got wind of the plan and seized the props. The event went off anyway, only not quite as planned: Peter and his friends are to be congratulated for their efforts at tweaking the conscience of what was

once called "cool grey city or love."

An unanswered question, though: just who are the parasites hiding behind the respectable-sounding facade of the Four Seas Corporation, and why must the City of San Francisco kowtow to their needs to assert "private property rights" at the cost of making homeless people who are among the least privileged in our society? True justice would be served if every last Four Seas shareholder was condemned to live in that ugly hole in the ground that they've made out of innocent people's homes.

Would You Buy A Used Constitution From This Man?

During the Punic Wars Imperial Rome became so obsessed with the threat allegedly posed by rival Carthage that when that city-state was finally conquered, Roman troops were not satisfied with the usual burning and sacking; they then proceeded to salt the land around Carthage so that nothing would ever grow there again.

Despite the apparently terminal damage done to his presidency by the well-publicized revelation that nearly every member of his administration is a criminal, Ronald Reagan seems similarly determined to ensure that no flower of democracy will ever sprout in the shredded compost he and his cronies have made of the US constitution.

If Congress lets him get away with it, Reagan may well be able to administer the *coup de grace* to that document in this, its 200th anniversary year. His appointment to the Supreme Court of Nixon protégé and right-wing darling Robert Bork, if allowed to go through, should complete the transformation of the high court into a rubber stamp for the conservative social and political agenda for many years to come, regardless of who gains control of the other branches of government in the coming elections.

Bork (pronounced "Dork" in many circles) first came to prominence during the Watergate scandal when he unsuccessfully attempted to help Richard Nixon quash the burgeoning case against the doomed president. One would think that on those grounds alone he would have been disqualified from public office, if not liable for the same prison term that Nixon himself was so richly entitled to. But one would be quite wrong; Bork's cavalier disregard for both law and ethics earned him an appointment to the federal appeals court from the president who has accomplished the once unthinkable feat of making Nixon look like a genuine statesman.

But if the thought of Bork holding any federal office leaves a bad taste in one's mouth, the specter of this corrupt fanatic being given the power to rewrite or rescind many of the fundamental liberties we have come to take for granted in this country should be terrifying. Bork has a clearly defined vision of how our system of government should be restructured, and, with the Supreme Court currently split 4-4 between right-wing and moderate justices, he would be able to tip the balance on any number of vital issues.

One of the first areas where Bork's malevolent influence might be felt could be that of abortion rights. Bork is an implacable foe of abortion, and has already clearly declared himself in favor of reversing the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision which first granted women control over their own reproductive systems. He has even argued in favor of state bans on contraception and that government is entitled to place whatever restrictions it chooses on private sexual behavior.

Perhaps the most frightening part of Bork's judicial philosophy is his contention that the First Amendment was never meant to protect all forms of free speech, merely those related to political matters. He has since expanded his definition of protected expression to include moral and scientific discourse, but ~~it~~ remains something that can or should be regulated by the state.

Jello Biafra and his co-defendants wouldn't have a chance if they came before Judge Bork. But this should be hardly surprising from a man who once dismissed the Bill of Rights as a "hastily drafted document upon which little thought was expended." All in all, Bork sounds like the kind of guy who would be happier in Russia, except that the Russians, with their new *glasnost* policy, probably wouldn't have him.

Around the Planet...

It's hard to write anything about America's current misadventures in the Middle East because there's no telling what further disaster Ronnie Raygun's Keystone Kavalry will have bumbled into by the time this goes to press.

The most recent chapter in this deadly farce has Arab oil tankers flying the American flag as they go steaming past Ayatollah-land, with a couple dozen Yankee warships going along for the ride in hopes that Khomeini will "make their day" by lobbing a few shots in their direction. The Supreme Islamic Cuckoo Brain meanwhile has put his own armada to sea to perform a set of maneuvers known as "Operation Martyrdom."

All the news is not bad on the international front. South Korea, for the past 40 years a repressive US-backed military dictatorship (in fact if not always in form), has had a near-revolution, somewhat along the lines of what happened in the Philippines. Dictator Chun Doo Hwan has had to agree to step down and allow free elections, and perhaps even more gratifying is that, just as in the Philippines, the turnaround was accomplished with relatively little violence. One can only hope that this sort of thing becomes a trend, as there is no end of other countries much in need of a similar housecleaning.

One of those countries, I'm sorry to say, is England. I'm especially sorry because I fear that England is not so likely to have anything resembling a peaceful transition of power if the vicious and anti-democratic policies of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party proceed apace.

Thatcher, like Reagan, has been put into and kept in office by a minority of true believers whose strength has been blown out of all proportion by a like-minded media and the absence of a cohesive opposition. But her strength is by no means entirely illusory and it is complemented by a disturbingly strong fascist movement, of which the best known component is the virulently racist National Front.

There is strength on the left, too, but it is constantly being dissipated in internal struggles (would it be a true left-wing movement if it were otherwise?). Even the relatively mainstream Labor Party, Thatcher's chief opposition, is a bunch of raving radicals by conventional US political standards, and some of its harder-core members have all but promised to be out on the barricades when the British people, their legendary patience finally exhausted, take to the streets.

MUSIC CAN MAKE YOU STUPID (In Fact It Probably Already Has)

The big, in fact the mega-news this month is of course Gilman-gate, also known as Speckles-gate, Speckles being the name of the more than slightly dead dog that FRANK

DISCUSSION of the FEEDERZ hurled into a not entirely pleased crowd at the Gilman Street Warehouse recently. In terms of media impact, it could even be dubbed the dog hurled round the world, as not only local papers, but also the national news wire Associated Press ran the story. I even met someone in Mendocino County who'd heard about it.

If Mr. DISCUSSION was looking for a reaction, he was not disappointed. A number of people took to the stage to ask, among other things, that he explain where he'd gotten the dog and how it had died, and a few seemed to be of the opinion that he should pack up, get out, and never darken the Gilman Street doorway again. Tempers cooled somewhat in the aftermath of the event when it became evident that the canine in question was in fact previously dead and not at the hands of Mr. DISCUSSION or any of the FEEDERZ.

There also, lest it be forgotten, was a cat involved, one which, according to nearby witnesses, was of a considerably mushier consistency than the dog. Some even alleged that pieces of it were later to be found in more than one place. It was not, as far as can be determined, Mr. DISCUSSION's own cat, which, rumormongers alleged, he has been systematically torturing for these many years for his personal gratification and artistic stimulation, whichever comes first.

Attempts among the Gilman Street community to form a united front against the perpetration of similar outrages in the future quickly foundered as the opposition fragmented into numerous sub-groups. Among the more vocal were the COALITION FOR DEAD ANIMAL RIGHTS, the COMMITTEE TO UPHOLD ARTISTIC STANDARDS, the ALL THINGS ARE SACRED ONE WORLD UNITY AND PEACE PARTY, and the PUNK ROCK IS BORING SO LET'S GET NORMAL HAIRCUTS AND BE NICE TO EACH OTHER FRONT. Then of course there were the disaffected nihilists and the unabashed aficionadoes of gore who felt that the FEEDERZ didn't go nearly far enough.

"If they were really hardcore, they would have sliced that sucker up into steaks and barbecued them on stage," proclaimed JOHNNY DOUCHEBAG, one of the more vocal representatives of the CARNIVORES RULE, VEGETARIANS SUCK movement. "The thing was so dead it didn't even bleed," griped SID SEWER, lead vocalist for the deathcore combo SPLATTERED YOUTH.

Regardless of the controversy, attendance at the Gilman Street nitery has doubled in recent weeks, with legions of bored suburbanites huddling near the stage in hopes that they too might be bonked in the head with a moribund household pet. A number of bands have revealed plans to show up with whole garbage bags stuffed with furry corpses. When asked for a comment, Gilman Street major domo and spiritual mentor "FATHER TIM" YOHANNAN said it was fine with him, "as long as they clean up their mess."

On a slightly less sensational front, San Francisco's premier hardcore band, MDC, have recorded a new album which ought to be out by early autumn. It's called *Millions of Damn Christians*, and the boys think it will go a long way toward silencing the critics who greeted *Smoke Signals*, the band's last outing, with less than universal acclaim.

As the title suggests, the LP has a(n anti-)religious theme, and the liner notes, which may come as a bit of a shock to some, reveal a spiritual side to MDC that has much in common with the "pagan" nature worship that long preceded the institution of commercial religion and which still claims innumerable adherents in the saner quarters of the world. The cover should succeed in rousing the ire of, well, millions of damn Christians, with its depiction of the Last Supper as hosted by MDC; guitarist GORDON, he of the long hair and saintly mien, portrays Our Ford Himself. Sample song title: "This Blood's For You."

Millions of Damn Christians will also be the first disc not released on the group's own R Radical Records; Berkeley's Boner Records will instead be doing the honors. We Bite Records (no known connection) of Tübingen, West Germany, will be handling the European pressing. MDC also expect to be launching their first European tour in four years beginning in late October.

Lots of other Bay Area band news... One earth-shattering development: TOMMY STRANGE's abrupt departure from the fast-rising FORETHOUGHT. No one from the group was available to comment on the reasons for the split, but the gossip mills offered no end of titillating rumors. Unfortunately for all you voyeurs, the LOOKOUT is not going to print any of them, so you'll just have to go dig them up for yourselves.

Also kaput: the East Bay's NO DOGS. They were supposed to be good, but came and went like the proverbial shooting star; I never even saw them. But how could they not have been good with a name like that? Similarly splitsville (this is old news, but the LOOKOUT's been away for a few months): CLOWN ALLEY, the flagship band of the burgeoning Alchemy Records. Alchemy, which has thus far placed a heavy emphasis on the speed-metal side of things, is the brainchild of the mysterious VICTOR H., San Francisco artist and moderately disturbed genius.

Alchemy discs, with production and packaging of major-label standards, have been getting excellent distribution and are reported to be selling very well in both the US and Europe. VICTOR, who was one of the single most important figures in the founding of the Gilman Street Project, has since dropped out of sight, to rumor has it, give his fulltime attention to counting the money that keeps rolling in.

One band that shows no signs of breaking up -- oh, before we get away from the dissolution news, bassist JOEL WING has left CORRUPTED MORALS -- is of course El Sobrante's ISOCRACY. The world's leading (perhaps only) exponents of Sobcore continue to cut a wide swath through the underground media and nearly everywhere else they stumble into. Most recently the boys were featured on the cover of MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL and the zany suburban teenagers will also soon be immortalized for the first (and most likely not the last) time on vinyl, as they head into the studio along with a host of other young Bay Area bands to record MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL's first release since 1984. In keeping with TIM YOHANNAN's well known fetish, it's to be a double 7".

All the ten bands involved were participants in a mammoth Gilman Street-sponsored battle of the bands in which, as far as is known, there were no winners other than the hearing-aid manufacturers. Among the more notable are Berkeley's CRIMPSHRINE (with skins being flailed by one-time FLIPSIDE Zinester of the Month AARON COMETBUS), and the already legendary OPERATION IVY, who some (probably heretical) observers now suggest have overtaken ISOCRACY as the most crucial band in the known universe. Trivia buffs will want to know, by the way, that OPERATION IVY was originally ISOCRACY's name, but the big-spirited quartet freely passed the sobriquet on to their fast-rising mates. Also on the OP IVY front, a certain amount of discussion has been overheard in the Gilman precincts as to whether singer JESSE or guitarist TIMMY (aka LINT and formerly of BASIC RADIO) should be anointed the band's reigning sex god. A couple of (no doubt dyslexic) fans have also been raving about DEVON of the new Marin County combo BOO! HISS! PFFFT! WHY DON'T WE THROW SOME TOMATOES AT THOSE GUYS!

For the first time in years, two good bands in one night at the I-Beam, the MR T EXPERIENCE and the DEAD MILKMEN. Even as strong as bill as that, however, is not likely to entice this columnist into that cess-pit of coked-out secretaries and their dope-dealing swains. FLIPPER will also play.

Finally, if you've read this far, you may be a sufficiently fanatical punk-rock fan to find the following of interest: the LOOKOUTS, Laytonville's dynamic speed-folk trio, return to action at (where else?) Gilman Street on August 15, after a four-months hiatus occasioned by Lawrence's travels abroad and frenetic drummer TRE COOL's being imprisoned in the hippie-run Camp Winarainbow (no joke!). The LOOKOUTS' performance may not necessarily be of the most sterling quality, since TRE's surly counselors failed to recognize the importance of the LOOKOUTS' need to practice at least once before the show and refused to release him from the camp's rigid regimen of dope manicuring and preteen sex. So while not promising to play any of the right

notes at the right time, the LOOKOUTS hope to compensate for musical shortcomings by wearing dumber costumes and acting stupider than ever (See Page 1 of the ISOCRACY HANDBOOK).

Nevertheless, the night should be worthwhile; it also features SoCal hardcore pioneers the ADOLESCENTS. Not to mention one of LA's most exciting new bands, BULIMIA BANQUET, including bassist-vocalist JULA, the self-described "zen buddhist freebird" who has the strange hippie-looking things dangling from all over her and who studies opera at USC. Need I mention the hosts and undisputed stars of the evening? (Hint... Four syllables, starts with a big I.)

Last note: SHORT DOGS GROW, also with a fairly recent album, lost their drummer in someplace like TEXAS, underlining once more the vital importance of keeping track of these vital details. The experience of many bands indicates that the safest and most reliable method is to simply keep drummers chained up except for when they have been escorted on to the stage and placed securely in front of their instruments.

Zines

Note for those ordering foreign zines: Most of the prices given are my approximations, based on the dollar equivalent of cover price plus my guess of what air mail postage would cost. I could be way off, and it's also possible you could get them cheaper if you're willing to wait for sea mail. Just remember, most zine editors are not getting rich off the enterprise -- in fact it usually costs them money to publish -- so try and give them the benefit of the doubt and send as much as you can afford.

IGNITE, PO Box 158, Hatfield, Herts., England, 75c plus two or three dollars postage

Quite an impressive first issue; 32 pages plus three more pages listing a variety of live tapes for sale. Contains a good mixture of music, politics, and social comment. I talked with Steve, one of the editors, several times in England and was impressed with his approach -- non-cynical and hopeful for the future, yet at the same time not willing to suck up the generic pap being handed out under the name of modern English punk rock. He reminded me a lot of the people who, sick of the non-direction being taken by Bay Area punk, got together to help build Gilman Street: Let's hope he can keep it up; he and his mates have also just started a band, and who knows, maybe they're going to totally remake the English scene. Someone needs to.

PROBLEM CHILD, 51 Yeading Lane, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0EN, England, 75c plus two or three dollars postage

This might be England's best punkzine, even if it does cover bands I have little or no interest in, like DRI, COC, and the ENGLISH DOGS. There's also an interview with the controversial (and, according to some reports, born-again racists) APOSTLES, a healthy dose of socio-political commentary, and even an ancient mail interview with MRR wunderkind Martin Sprouse. If editor Paul Problem Child has a weakness, it might be that he's too uncritical, at least when it comes to his favorite bands. But then except for me, who isn't? Between PC and IGNITE you're likely to get a pretty good picture of what there is of the English scene.

TRUST, c/o Dolf Hermannstädter, Salzmannstr. 53, 8900 Augsburg, West Germany, \$3.00 ppd.

This is probably Europe's best fanzine, with excellent layouts and intelligent writing. Unfortunately for most of my readers, it's almost completely in German. The political and social consciousness is similar to that of MRR, although the most recent issue gave interview space to the corny satanic speed metal SLAYER and the ignorant homophobic ravings of the religious crackpots BAD BRAINS. If you know some German or are studying it in school, this would be some excellent reading material to practice on. In fact bring it to class and ask your teacher to help you translate it. He or she might learn a few new words, too.

MOXY, c/o Eric Bensch, Kirchweg 9, 7800 Freiburg, West Germany, \$1.00 ppd.

Another German fanzine which I haven't yet found time to completely translate, but what I have figured out looks good. I also spent some time with editor Eric and know that he's got quite a lot to say. The subject matter is mostly music and bands, but approached with a critical awareness that's quite refreshing.

SCENE PLONGEON, Appt 1505, 4 allée du Parc, 44800 St-Nerblain, France, \$3.00

A new zine, and an excellent one. Of course you have to be able to read French, but it's worth learning just so you can read the two page article on the LOOKOUTS. French punk has tended to lag behind, more or less stuck in the 70s, but this zine is totally modern, and though not as slick, sort of comes across as the Gallic equivalent of TRUST. The writing is incisive and thoughtful, so much so it even manages to make the LOOKOUTS sound significant (actually, such a feat goes way beyond incisive and thoughtful into the realms of mega-fantasy). By far the best zine I've seen out of France.

WHAT CENSORS FORBID, 627 Taylor #76, San Francisco CA 94102, 25¢ plus 22¢ postage

This is a new project from Gilman Street regular Jonnie Hell; whether it's meant to be a one-off or an ongoing zine only time will tell. It's got some drawings and photos, some of Jonnie's thoughts on the world at large as well as specific subjects like tree spiking, and an article on homelessness by Jeff of CRIMP SHRINE, accompanied by CRIMP SHRINE song lyrics. If you come to Gilman Street — and if you don't, why are you wasting your life? — pick up a copy from Jonnie; he's the one with the rad hawk who likes to sit by the front door and annoy people.

ANOTHER STUPID ZINE, c/o Ben, 412 West Main, Bellevue OH 44811, 22¢ postage

Well, with a name like that, I guess I don't have to spend too much time reviewing this one, do I? Actually, as Ben explained to me in a more recent letter (and I wish he'd stop calling me Mr. Livermore), he didn't really mean it was stupid (but Ben, you're not supposed to have to explain these things), and it isn't. Ben is a 17 year old high school student in what sounds like a not particularly exciting Ohio town (save your money and move to Laytonville after you graduate, dude) and is trying to make some sense out of things. Yes, there are young people out there in America who think and act for themselves, and I'm sorry that some malevolent fate condemns them to live in places like Bellevue, Ohio. On the other hand, I wish I'd there'd been a few more of them when I was growing up in the midwest.

20TH CENTURY SAINTS, c/o Vince, PO Box 132, Acton, London W3 8XQ, England, \$2.00

My first instinct was to label this a punk revival zine, judging from its cover drawing of a couple leather-studded mohicans making out against a backdrop of 70s Britpunk posters for everything from the SEX PISTOLS to the UK SUBS to the RUTS and the DAMNED. And they do go on a bit about the good old days and getting the scene united again and all that, but they also cover some new bands, most notably CULTURE SHOCK, and the new direction being taken by one of the old bands, the NEUROTICS. Well done, but a little too much wallowing in the past.

BREAKOUT Photozine, Röhrlstieg 1d, 2000 Hamburg 72, West Germany

Do you like to look at pictures of punk rock bands? If not, perhaps you had better skip this one. On the other hand, if you want a German fanzine but can't read German, this may be just the one for you. Almost no words, but what few there are are mostly in English. Photos of European and American bands and a few skateboard shots for good measure. This is similar in content to the recent MRR/TRUST co-produced photozine WELCOME TO CRUISE COUNTRY, but personally I prefer this one. There's no price given; \$3.00 might cover it.

TALES FROM THE RATHOUSE, PO Box 14292, San Francisco CA 94114, 22¢ postage

This one keeps rolling along, up to #5 now, and as editor Joe Britz has pointed out, he's managed to crank out two issues since the LOOKOUT last graced the newsstands. Unfortunately, most of Joe's regular contributors (including yours truly) deserted him for issue #5 and he had to do most of it himself. But what's lacking in variety is made up for by Joe's mordant wit and stooge-like self-deprecation. Highlights include the tragic story of Joe's budding career being cut short by his not possessing the correct underarm deodorant and the attempt of a real rat to make its way into the Rathouse by a most unorthodox route.

ROCK FOR NO REASON, 3507 Morningside Drive, Bloomington IN 47401, \$1.00

I've been enjoying this one for the better part of a year now and don't know why I haven't got around to writing something about it sooner. The crux of this zine is the promotion of an alternative music festival of the same name scheduled for September 4-6 in Bloomington, Indiana (I was all set to start making jokes about places like Bloomington, Indiana until I remembered that there's someone here who might clobber me if I do), and I'm not sure whether the zine will continue after the festival. It should; Eric ESAD (what ESAD is supposed to stand for seems to be a running joke,

but my most reliable information is Eat Shit And Die) has got some great attitudes and some hilarious ways of putting them across. One minute you're thinking the guy is totally damaged and the next you're thrilling to the magnificence of his insights into the great issues of the day. Check this one out. In fact, why not write him a letter; I'd be really curious about what he'd say in real life. Oh yeah, if you're in a band, maybe you should go to Bloomington, Indiana next month and play at his festival. Because I know my band sure as hell isn't going to. I mean I wish we could, but I'd probably kill both of my bandmates before we got over the Sierra Nevada. If they didn't do it to me first. Do you get the feeling I'm getting off the subject?

INSIDE JOKE, C/O Elayne Wechsler, PO Box 1609, Madison Square Station, New York NY 10159, \$1.50 ppd.

I can't remember if I reviewed this one before, but even if I did it deserves another mention. Not a punkzine at all, though some of its writers have links to "the scene," IJ bills itself as a "newsletter of comedy and creativity," and that is about exactly right. The print is even smaller than the LOOKOUTS, but it's readable. The quality and subject matter of the writing vary widely, as you'd expect with so many different contributors, but even the worst of it has some interest and most of it is good to excellent. Editor Elayne Wechsler is already up to issue #53 and going strong. Highly recommended.

FLIPSIDE, PO Box 363, Whittier CA 90608, \$1.50 ppd.

It would be hard to believe that there's anyone who doesn't already know about FLIPSIDE except that I just discovered it myself about a year and a half ago. Actually, I didn't really discover it; I knew it existed, but had just never gotten around to reading a copy. Anyway, for anyone who's been missing out, FLIPSIDE, along with MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL, is one of the twin pillars of punk rock culture and is absolutely essential reading.

FS takes a less overtly political stance than MRR, but there's no lack of consciousness or social awareness. It also, as one would expect of a SoCal fanzine, focuses a bit more on the entertainment side of things, and sometimes you might get the impression that many of its younger readers are more concerned with their skateboards, their complexions, and their social standing than with animal rights, nuclear disarmament, and positive anarchy. You'd probably be right, too, but you need to read this zine anyway. Besides, they say nice things about me; publications that do this are all too rare and I'm sure you'll agree they should be supported.

Dear Readers:

The LOOKOUT has never been noted for the number or quality of its graphics, but this issue marks a new nadir in that department: there are absolutely no graphics at all. Why? Because I lost them. I could have put off publication a few more days while I looked for them, but I didn't want to. So if you mainly like to look at pictures, you might as well skip this issue. Sorry about that. Anyway, it's good to be back.

Your pal,
Lawrence

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