







FRANK CARTWRIGHT'S

TV column

EVERY FEW hours pilots of the US Air Force take off and fly around with nuclear bombs in the bellies of their B-52s.

Every child born in the world since the testing of such weapons began has been born with the radioactive element strontium 90 in its bones.

But if someone goes out into the street and screams that they have an atomic bomb inside them or that they are being destroyed by invisible rays, they will usually end up in a mental hospital with a few shots of 110 volts across their frontal lobes and nicely subdued in a hefty chemical straight jacket.

This situation is repeated in countless ways in modern capitalist society; madness often fiercely illuminates the normal world, and lights it so brightly and clearly that the mad one has to be shut up or locked away with great speed before he upsets too many people.

Most of the progressive thinking and practice in contemporary psychotherapy is concerned with precisely this state of affairs.

Alienation

Any treatment which does not recognize and found itself upon the alienation which capitalism fosters merely serves to prolong the confusion and despair so necessary to its survival.

But that in no way glorifies insanity. The desperation, terror and pain which make up so much of the experience are rarely welcome; they usually reflect not a growing awareness of intolerable objective contradictions, but a defeat in the battle of a subjective vehicle of those contradictions.

Sometimes, however, the subject gets a brutal and shattering insight into the real world; this may take a symbolic form where the reality of the unconscious mind surges up and invades the conscious mind with all its archetypal images, monsters and raging demons.

People who have experienced this breakdown of normal barriers sometimes speak of it afterwards as a crucial and enlightening episode. The occasionally emerge from it with memories of an experience of 'identity with all that is or ever was' and may be utterly changed in their comprehension of the world.

Sometimes too they refer to

their insight as an experience of God—not in an abstract, metaphysical or personalized way, but simply as a means of alluding to the apparent totality of their subjective perception.

This, of course, can also lead to endless confusion, metaphysical ramblings and theological speculations—most of which nicely lend themselves to propping up the archaic and reactionary churches and their dogmas.

Such a way of speaking about such a valuable experience in itself reveals, and flows from clear historical and philosophical traditions.

Lenin noted very clearly Feuerbach's analysis of the attempt to convert subjective existence into an objective one ('Collected Works', vol. 38, p. 81) and there is no cause for any Marxist to remain caught in this idealist trap.

However it is currently very popular to tread this well-worn dead-end of idealism and even to incorporate into it certain selected aspects of Marx's writings.

It is especially treacherous ground because the experiences upon which it is founded are undoubtedly revealing and central in any appreciation of modern capitalist life.

But the attempt to use them to help tie us to reactionary thought is not to be ignored.

Much of the art of the past 100 years, for example, is an interlacing of language and delirium, but equally the opposition of these two, of art and madness, is total: its opposition of life and death, reason (in its fullest sense) and unreason, man and nature.

GOD IN THE HEART

For the assertion of madness is the assertion of nature over consciousness.

'There is nothing that the madness of men invents which is not either nature made manifest or nature restored.' (Michel Foucault, 'Madness and Civilization', p. 283.)

ALL THIS is prompted by the BBC-2 series 'The Timeless Moment' (10.20, Friday).

These three programmes give us Geoffrey Moorhouse 'talking to people about insights into reality glimpsed through drugs, madness or mysticism'. 'Radio Times'. (My emphasis.)

Last week's film concentrated on two women who have gone through profound subjective crises and for both of whom the experience was creative.

Mary Barnes was a hospital

nurse; her insanity took the form of a complete regression to infantile life and the gradual regrowing back into adulthood and reason.

She now paints and exercises an often irreplaceable compassion and understanding for other people in similar circumstances.

She has had exhibitions and, wishing no unkindness, has become a star spokesman for a particularly interesting form of approaching mental illness.

But the contradictions of this method of approach in capitalist society remain dangerously confused in the minds of many who regard themselves as progressive and enlightened.

Mary Barnes expressed it well when she said about her experience:

'The more I kept in touch with my own depth the more I understood the world.'

This is precisely Hegelianism, where being is converted into a special reality.

The truth is still Hegel on his head—the more I keep in touch with the world the more I understand my own depth.

And indeed the paintings of the two women (Morag Coate was the other) showed the same idealist inversion. As therapy there can be no quarrel with a picture which shows a chimpanzee who, after dismantling a bicycle and shaking hands with a man, climbed a pylon and was electrocuted by grasping the overhead cables.

The process of putting this onto canvas, along with much else in the form of representational fragments, helps to objec-

tify experience and thus make it comprehensible to the person involved.

But art, which also objectifies, also attempts to connect inner and outer experience and serves to forward consciousness of objective reality—even though it is inevitably passed through the subjective experience of the artist.

It may be therapeutic, but it is so on the premise that where the artist can no longer bring the work into being, where he can no more wrest a formed expression out of the raw opposite of nature and unconsciousness, it is exactly there that art faces us with the next great question to be answered.

In other words, it is the triumph of reason over unreason that we celebrate, the victory of form over chaos that excites our admiration.

We accept all of the world, all of nature and its workings in us, the more to change it and bring it to comprehension.

The programme did nothing of this sort though.

It was intensely interesting in its material, but its makers totally reflected the latter-day idealism of theologians like Tillich and others.

One of the therapists taking part in the film is similarly placed.

David Cooper, along with R. D. Laing, Aaron Esterson and others, has made a large contribution to the understanding of subjective processes and their dialectical nature.

Clarity

In his writings ('Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry', for example) he has traced these processes with great clarity and with clear acknowledgement of the influence of Marx and other materialist philosophers. But the outcome is still existentialism.

None of them have been able to make the step into a truly materialist and dialectical theory of the unconscious.

Some—especially Laing—have come as close as you can go before veering off from the implacable logic of the class struggle and their responsibility before history.

This film was merely a glimpse of some of this; it is an area where a revolutionary film maker will one day make a critical intervention.

But in this period it is unlikely that we shall see such a piece on television. Idealism and God (however identified) are too important a part of the ideology of capitalism to be lightly broken with or easily thrown away.

David Cooper



R. D. Laing



Workers Press notebook

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY

AS YOU bask in the holiday drizzle of the English summer, ponder the fate of Walter K., of Cologne. It might happen to you one day.

Returning from a mountain-climbing holiday, Walter was told by his boss that he had to refund his holiday pay, because he was so tired that he couldn't concentrate on his job.

Appealing to the Bonn Ministry of Labour, he was informed that the boss was right.

A Ministry spokesman even warned that anyone arriving back from holiday too tired to work might have to lose a week's pay as well. The W German trade unions' legal department said this was correct.

Said the man from the Ministry:

'The holiday exists so that workers can draw new strength for their jobs. The best way to spend a holiday is to sit back and do nothing.'

He warned workers not to spend long hours on do-it-yourself jobs around the house and told them that long cycle tours might jeopardize their holiday pay also.

However, a court has ruled that this does not apply to W German soldiers. For some reason, they are entitled to tire themselves out as much as they please.

So don't be surprised if the next productivity deal demands full reports on employees' expenditure of energy while outside the factory, checked by inspectors and special sleep-meters attached to everybody's bed.

A LETTER in the latest issue of the Communist Party journal 'Comment' illuminates the depth of the CP crisis—even if it can do little to resolve it.

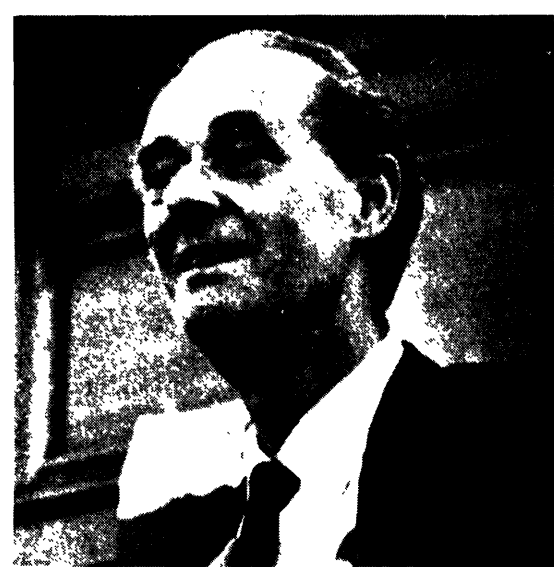
Written by a sincere believer in the 'British Road to Socialism', the Party's reformist programme, it nonetheless puts some questions to the leadership which blow the whole policy sky-high.

The author, David Waddington, remarks on the urgings of Party leaders to contest all elections, even when little local political work had been carried out, while at the same time they talk about 'the general election being a culmination of five years' mass work, not an interruption'.

'Who are they trying to kid, besides themselves?' asks Waddington.

'One wonders just how out of touch with the reality of branch life they must be. As for the "important political reasons" for our low votes, they have been with us for a long time. They don't explain the disastrous deterioration.'

Waddington insists on asking the obvious, but studiously-avoided questions. 'Why the continuing low level of local Party activity? Why so much passivity in our ranks? Why the continual loss of membership, the inability to grow? Why our weakness amongst young people, the critical section for Communists and the Left? Why the loss in votes and sometimes seats in areas where we should expect advances, e.g. GLC tenants? Why the crisis in "Star"



Gollan

sales by local CP branches? It's a fine paper...

Waddington's demand for answers to these questions is all the more powerful because it comes from someone who so clearly agrees with the basic outlook of the leadership.

(His only tentative suggestion to solve the problem is: 'Perhaps we can learn from the Italians.') He reflects many workers who found their way into the CP because they thought it really was a Communist party, and got caught up in the basically conservative politics of Stalinism. Now, as the working class enters massive struggles against the Tories, they try to understand the CP's decline, and why Gollan and company refuse to discuss it.

'Of course there are no easy solutions,' says Waddington, 'but how much better we'll all feel when responsible Party leadership says "Yes, comrades, the facts are disturbing, so something is wrong; let us get together in honest and open discussion and find the way out".'

But he will never see the day when those who led the CP through the lies and slanders of the 1930s, the disciples of Stalin, conduct such a discussion—they have too much to hide.

People like Waddington who are trying to understand the desperate problems of the CP, must go deeper than mere styles of work, or even than the reformist of the 'British Road to Socialism'. He might do worse than to

ponder the words of J. Gollan when he said:

'The Chinese comrades by implication suggest that Stalin was against the concept of the possible peaceful transition to socialism. "The British Road to Socialism" was published in full in "Pravda" with Stalin's full approval.'

KING BILLY

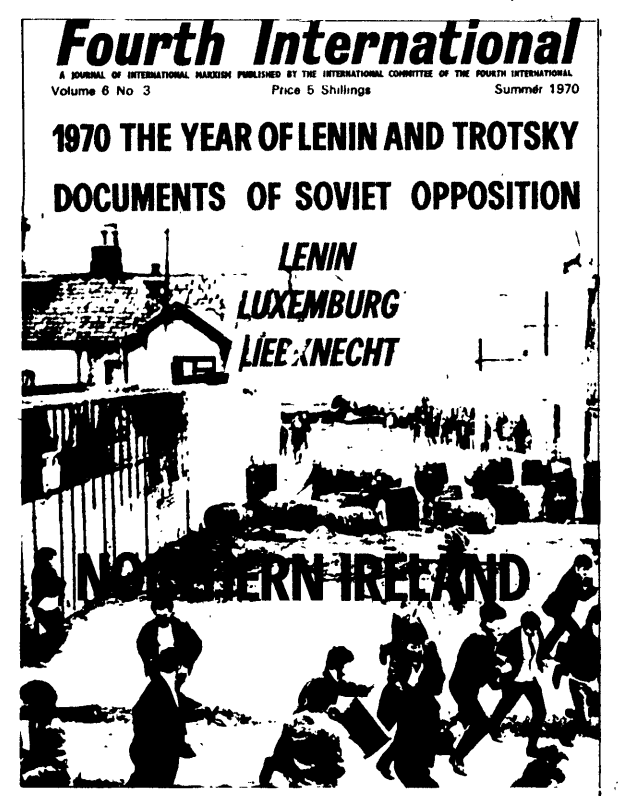
AN AD in Paisley's 'Protestant Telegraph' announces: 'MAGNIFICENT ORANGE AND BLACK SHIELDS AND PLAQUES. The very latest tribute to Dr Paisley's success in Lacquered Mahogany.'

The shop, situated in Belfast's Sandy Row, also offers 'All general Orange badges, pins, wallets, notebooks and jewellery, at PROTESTANT PRICES'.

However, the main attractions are photographs not only of Dr Ian R. K. Paisley, but also of William, Prince of Orange.

This is a considerable technical achievement, since King Billy passed into the Protestant heaven in 1707.

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