NEWS
WITHOUT
PHOTOGRAPHS

By Iain Davies

New Zealand and Bermuda stand at cultural extremes as examples of how to cope with subservience to nuclear imperialism.

During the Second World War, Winston Churchill persuaded the Bermuda parliament to lease to the United States a segment of St. George's as a naval air station. The rest, as it were, is history. A world to itself, the US Navy and army base physically dominates the eastern part of the island and politically the rest. Not only does the NASA station contribute its share to Star Wars as the major tracking station for the northern hemisphere (the other one is in northern Australia), which indicates why Bob Hawke's attitude towards the USA is unambiguous, but the entire seabed from Bermuda to the Bahamas is mined, while US and Soviet nuclear submarines play cat and mouse in the wild Sargasso Sea. There is a Bermuda Triangle alright, but it consists of capital, nuclear warheads and contraband goods (mainly drugs).

The political culture of Bermuda is as bad as the imagination would invent. The government that is entrenched in Hamilton consists of (mainly black) lawyers and businessmen who are concerned to maintain the status quo by raising no major social issues, let alone nuclear dependency. Race is never mentioned except to declare that it is not an issue. (As with many Caribbean countries — Bahamas, Barbados, Antigua are clear examples — everyone is acutely conscious of race, but official discussion of it is taboo.) Everything is swept under the rug of comfortable colonialism. (The most blatant example occurs at the beginning of every summer when eccentrics, hobos, cripples, the flotsam and jetsam of Bermuda are sent off to mental institutions so that the towns look clean for the avalanche of the all-important tourists.) An oppression, family social democratic, disagrees on some of the nuances of dependency practice, but offers no major resistance to the convenience of dual colonialism (British by constitution but American by money and military conquest, a situation not unlike Britain's own). There is no noticeable nationalism and, down the road, the only likely constitutional shift would be for Bermuda to become, after Puerto Rico, the 52nd state of the Union. This summer a faint whirl of alternative politics was marked in a Pan-African Conference organized by the Original African
HEBREW ISRAELITE NATION OF JERUSALEM, a group of black Jews from Tennessee who were less concerned with Bermudian nationalism or Black Power than with Old Testament communal living (including vegetarian diets, polygamy) and showing that selected blacks, now settled in the Negev, are the original Jews. Their conference did, however, produce a splinter of the underlying under that might be ignited by a well-placed match. A black lawyer, trained at Osgoode Hall, pointed out how justice and the judiciary discriminated against blacks in Bermuda, a view based in part on experience. Certain members of the Bermuda Bar Association called for disciplinary action against disbarment, which, as it happens, was not followed through. Clearly, the natives are rioters, but we can be sure that if anything was tried, wrath would be slapped quicker than you could say "Grenada."

The three million Europeans and Polynesians who occupy the islands between Samoa and Antarctica represent the ultimate in civilized retreat from northern metropolitans, and, as might be expected, are cautious about anything that impinges on them from the rest of the world. So far they have managed to avoid cable TV, satellite dishes (Bermuda, which has no TV of its own, is littered with them), expressways and post-structuralism. Only recently, on Belfield, a city built on seven relatively extinct volcanoes at the southern tip of the Kazuko Tree, has Auckland constructed buildings taller than four stories. The main conclusion to the underside of urbanism is an abundance of massage parlours, a flourishing marijuana industry, several punk and new wave groups and the importation of British cops to keep the parlour owners, the drop pod- dlers, the punks and the anti-apartheid demonstrators in their place. Otherwise New Zealand is a country where the quality of life is central to all public debates, parochial in the best sense of the word, because it is a debate which is shared in by all sections of the population, in the North and South Islands. The issues, not surprisingly, are sexuality (focused most recently by the decision of the government to implement the UN resolution on equal rights), Maori rights, environmental control (including nuclear energy), and standard of cost of living, and censorship, all of them fighting on territory which seeks to preserve the essence of what is and challenging reformers to show why changes offer a qualitative better way. Signs at the entrance to each borough — "You are Entering Mount Eden - A Nuclear Free Zone" — emphasize the community strength of the environmental case and trace the connection between foreign policy and husbandry. The resistance to nuclear warheads is a profoundly conservative position, but no less conservative than the spraying of aircraft to prevent the importation of pests who might blight New Zealand crops. Conservatism is a shared perception of New Zealanders who might disturb the social, ecological balance.

SEX/TEXTUAL POLITICS Tracing the Imaginary in the Films of Valie Export

By Brenda Longfellow

WHERE are the boundaries to be drawn between inner and outer "realities"? How to separate the observer from the observed, subject from object, desire from projection?

The first images in a published collection of Valie Export's photographs and drawings from 1966-77 is a black and white reproduction of the famous Velasquez painting, "Las Meninas," which was analyzed by Foucault in "The Order of Things." The painting represents a self-reflexive inscription and over-turning of classical relations of representation, of the classical distinction between subject and object. Framed by a large mounted canvas on the right, the tableau features the artist with palette in hand and a variety of figures: young girls, a medall, a dog in the foreground, all of whom are staring out of the frame at the ostensibly subject of the painter's painting — a space and a position occupied (equally) by ourselves as spectators. Here then, the gaze is foregrounded, circulated in an exchange that confounds the distinction between observer and observed, subject and object.

Export joins that particular convergence of concerns to modernity with a wry twist — placing the image of a 35mm still camera in the painter's extended right hand. This additional inscription re-situates the critical frame, and relates the problematic of representation to the 20th century field of photography and cinema — to the field, that is, of Export's own work.

Indeed, what circulates around the signature Valie Export (a.k.a. Waltraud Hellinger) is a rich currency of cinematic images, bizarre. Brutally witty and devastating in their psychic immediacy. Her images blazon themselves on one's memory with all the tragic vitality of an obsession. Frag-