

of the place was there, the shudder of a town shaking off its young men into the taverns and juvenile courts of downtown Ottawa. And also being the first town ever to elect a black man to the Quebec legislature.

And there —

There was the war memorial of Gatineau. A four-sided block with a soldier on one side, a sailor on another, an airman on a third. And on the fourth, the one containing no dates (for the dates aren't yet known of the next war that will call on Gatineau for volunteers) — a servicewoman.

Transport trucks whizzed past.

Gilles and Nathalie were bored. Come on, I said, let's at least look at this town! Maybe we've missed the marchers, but...

Then, in the middle of town where the houses began to be mostly of wood, there came, crashing down over rocks, the Gatineau River. A little river, crashing down from the hills with the red slashed across them. Crashing down under a bridge, crashing down past a town lookout platform, and then going quietly into a widening, into a mixing, into a fusion, with the Ottawa River.

The very point at which my earliest Québécois sense of myself — a kid who went to "the Gatineau," sugared off in "the Gatineau," had friends with relatives "up in the Gatineau" — fused with my Canadian sense of myself; the slow, plain, wide river, named for a disappeared Indian tribe, that formed the upper border of Southern Ontario.

Later we joined up with the marchers, we found them in the church basement. The sun came down and I walked with Gilles and Nathalie in these mild-poverty streets where I'd never been on foot before, which I'd always passed through by car.

The people in this church basement were scarcely conscious of being in Hull. They were a special tribe of people by now, they were toughened towards the world, softened towards each other, they were "the March." And they were entirely caught up in the vast and abstract reasons which were driving them on to the conclusion of their adventure.

The had, they felt, left their regional selves behind. They were philosophers now, and pilgrims. They were Isiah, and Almighty Voice, and Emma Goldman. What did it matter what riverbank they were on?

It has occurred to me that drastic travels are one of the most characteristic actions of the 1980s.

The space shuttle explodes and kills its crew; all the more reason for us to dash frenetically about the one planet we do know how to travel.

When the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Turks of poor, no-longer-imperial Turkey, the illegals of El Salvador, and all the other drastic-travellers, arrive in Quebec, in Canada...

It seems to me that these human beings are both clarifying and extending the meaning of the famous sentence, *The medium is the message*.

The medium, here, is the world system of ships, buses and computer circuits to certify tickets and reservations; bribery, also, of course, and prostitution and money, and the electronic signals that represent money (representing, thus, a representation) — and above all planes, those pieces of savage bauxite flying through the sky.

That's the medium, all that.

And the message, transmitted along this medium,

is the people themselves. Their lives, their torn lives, their crazy hope of suddenly being in another hemisphere, another economy, another ideology, where things will be okay at last.

Where all will be forgiven, all will be clean, all will be possible. So magnificently possible that every penny and indignity you scrape together is worth it. This jolt is worth it, this trip, this hurtling of oneself along a wire of world communications like an electron of injustice dearly wishing to ground itself in the cool, well-organized soil of North America.

These people are a message from the Third World to us, to the First World. They have communicated themselves to us on a system we created and put in place. We put it in place primarily in the desire to communicate *our* messages to *them*. But first they created the tradition of the immigrant who flies many times back to his left-behind homeland for visits; then they devised, in the 1960s, this still more punctual use of the system. Even the apparently easy-to-get Canadian passport seems to be part of the system; all the easygoing aspects of our not-always-easygoing country.

They place before us, underdevelopment, hunger, shattered cultures and food chains. This is when they are *not* true refugees, but economic exiles. And they place dictatorship, torture, disappearance squads, before us, when they *are* true refugees, true political. They are the *parecidos*, the *ones who appear*.

Much has been written about the reduction of life, vitality, sensuality, to mere imagery on screens in the video age. Here we are in the presence of the opposite phenomenon. An actual society becomes a screen on which unexpected human figures from another society appear suddenly through the relatively instantaneous manipulation of engines, motors, steering wheels.

The message has been picked up very clearly in my part of the society. Quebec, in a rather peevish and xenophobic mood, nevertheless became very attached to the Turks Canada expelled this spring; media coverage created sympathy for this Islamic and little-known group, and people were out to picket their departure. Was there a compensation here, for say, the shooting of a black youth by the Montreal police? Was there something Christian; or something internationalist left over from more revolutionary times in recent Quebec history? An indirect response to Palestine, Chile, Afghanistan, Iran? Or is it simply the *faces*?

Hard to say.

The message, the flesh-and-blood data on the jet circuits and the battered steamers, it seems to me, both terrify and thrill us. We are invaded. But we cannot help but grasp that this is another part of the Long March against War and Misery.

Nathalie, during the march, had invented and sung a song:

*C'est la longue marche*

*Con-tre la guerre*

*Et LAAAAAAA misère...*

It was sung to the tune of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*, which if I recall was a song of the American Civil War.

Why not?

But I had my own song going through my head during this time. Mine was an old Quebec tune. It was called *Les Draveurs de la Gatineau*.

*Malcolm Reid is a free-lance journalist living in Quebec City. This is the second in a series of regular columns in Border/Lines.*

## Surviving Thatcher

### Ioan Davies

**A**s Canadians debate what will happen to the cultural industries after Free Trade, the British are not so much concerned with the takeover of their industries by foreigners as they are with the enemy within the gates. Thatcher's government has culture all over its agenda, but most of its concerns are actively hostile to the idea that the arts and the media should be critical, independent, innovative and socially conscious. It abolished the Greater London Council largely because the GLC's cultural policies were politically assertive in favour of working class, black, gay, feminist, left activities (see Franco Bianchini's article in *New Formations*, No. 1, 1987). It has established a committee under the chairmanship of a very conservative ex-editor of the *Times* to monitor sex and violence on TV and Radio (apparently Arthur Conan Doyle and the A-Team are on the hit list). It has decided to "open up the air-waves" so the BBC may become a pay-tv network, while Rupert Murdoch will have no less than four regular channels (based mainly on American imports). In its notorious "Spycatcher" trials and their many repercussions it is

attempting to muzzle the press. (In the past year, Index on Censorship has found the Thatcher government more censorious than the USSR). In its policy towards the arts it chooses to reduce funding in spite of a major report published by the Policy Studies Institute on the economic importance of the arts in Britain which shows that in 1985/6 the arts (in terms of spending on supply and services) were as important a part of the economy as automobiles. And in education, not only has it decided to "privitize" a large segment of the schools, but it has so savaged the grants to universities that some of them have established sub-faculties (called "credit-banks") where departments have to demonstrate their marketability in order to survive.

The picture is not a happy one and anyone who returns to Britain is quickly made conscious of the overwhelming greed of the moneyed classes, their eyes bulging with avarice as they grab anything that is marketable and turn it into plastic gold, and talk, quite freely, of the riff-raff who populate the rest of the country. (The most brazen quote that I found was

in *The Spectator* by Auberon Waugh on July 18, 1988, who said that the elite are elite and rich because they are more intelligent than everyone else). But, on the other side, a visit to Liverpool, or Hull or South Wales, or a walk around Depford in South London convincingly shows that there is another country that is both plundered and ignored by the avaricious, that this is the country where the real culture is created. The new bourgeoisie of Thatcher's world are not the producers of culture: they are the consumers, transmitters, policemen. They create nothing but money. What art they dislike, they shut out. There has not been one single opera, novel, collection of stories, film, TV programme, rock group created by this class which has lasted beyond its first run (unless *Evita* and *The Phantom of the Opera* are seen as celebrations of Thatcherism).

So what is the hope now? Stuart Hall has said repeatedly over the past two or three years that we are in for the long haul. But that presumably means the long haul if we are to win. Win what? The deep pessimism of the British left is based, I think, on the sense that it has worked hard to change governments and that clearly with the Thatcher dominion it has failed. But if Thatcherism has done nothing else, it has torn away the illusions of the left that nationalization represented socialism or that the "masses" reflected a homogeneous and potentially victorious collective. By showing the radical centralizing focus of the right, Thatcher has compelled the left to rethink itself as the decent politics of "winning" the here and now where politics really matters: in the institutions where we work, in sexuality and gender, in racial encounters, in the practical knowledge of negotiating ourselves through the make-work technologists who would define our daily lives (doctors, lawyers, accountants) and in learning to make sense of the codes that impose themselves from the media, "politics," religion. The over-arching politics is, of course, not with Thatcher, but with the multinationals, nuclear energy, electronics, international migration, the depopulation/deforestation of the countryside and plundering of the sea, the super-importance of the money-market. Pessimism is based on not understanding these processes. The responsible politics is that of Foucault, not a sclerotic Marx, of Victor Serge and Rosa Luxemburg, not Lenin, of (in the British context) Mary Shelley, not Robert Owen. At this point it is not a question of winning, but of struggle.

Thus a few gleanings from a visit around the sites

of what the British left might think of as cultural wreckage, but which I would like to think of as the habitus of a space that we would all like to inhabit. On these the counter-hegemonies are being built. First, but not least, *Marxism Today*, not censored by the Communist Party as I mistakenly predicted in *Border/Lines* 11, a vibrant journal which marks the ultimate dynamic between theory and practice. Second, the cultural life of London, in spite of Thatcher, is assertive, politically creative: the boroughs and the people that provided the basis for the GLC's power are still there, doing the things for which the GLC was created: Battersea, Islington, Camden, Greenwich (the last report of the *Greater London Arts Council Quarterly* is replete with action and counter-action. *Time Out* and *City Limits* will give anyone the information they need: London cultural life is not based on the so-called West-End, which barely exists anymore, having been chewed up by those impresarios who only cater to tourists and the lure of Broadway, Ed Mirvish and the rich cultural morons). Four Black film collectives, a host of Feminists and agit-prop theatres, a range of music which includes perhaps the best collection of African music anywhere in the world, and a self-critical awareness in the fine arts which is unrivalled anywhere. Academically, two centres which we thought were threatened, the Birmingham Centre and Ernesto Laclau's graduate work on the study of discourse at Essex, are now fully-fledged University departments. Although *m/f* may have closed, *Feminist Theory*, a host of other feminist journals, *Virago Press* flourish. And there is, of course, the Virago Workshop, *New Left Review* with its Verso publishing house, and a large selection of music magazines some of which display the very essence of cultural opposition.

What Thatcher attempted was to destroy what she thought were the institutional pillars of a socialist tradition. Instead she has provided the opportunity for that tradition to sharpen its stance, becoming more affirmative in new terms. If radical culture in Britain now adopts something of a *samizdat* status, it also shows a dynamism that is shorn of any vestiges of co-optation. Thatcherism has toughened the cultural grounds of opposition.

*Ioan Davies is a member of the Border/Lines collective.*

## Targeting Canada: Apartheid's Friends on the Offensive

David Galbraith

A video tape distributed to all Canadian MPs; a full page ad in a Calgary newspaper during the Olympics; a series of small public meetings in the Maritimes. Each by itself might be merely another in the seemingly endless barrage of apartheid propaganda which opponents of apartheid have been confronting for years. But cumulatively a more sinister pattern can be discerned: we seem to be

in the midst of a much more coherent initiative to influence key sectors of Canadian public opinion by the South African government and its local supporters than we have witnessed for some time.

### Journalistic Sleaze from Washington to Worthington

The centrepiece of the new order of apartheid apolo-

gias is the video "The ANC Method: Violence," allegedly written and directed by the well-known right wing press hack and sometime Tory candidate Peter Worthington. Its timing could hardly have been more carefully contrived. The day before Oliver Tambo's long awaited visit to Ottawa, copies of the tape, and an accompanying booklet, were delivered to all federal MPs. Moreover, its release also coincided with a major series of newspaper ads run by the South African embassy, which were explicitly directed against the Tambo visit (see, eg. *Globe and Mail*, Aug. 28, 1987).

Tambo's reception in Ottawa suggests that this campaign was not entirely ineffective. Many observers were caught off-guard by the chilly climate of his discussions with Clark and Mulroney (see *SAR*, III, 2). Mulroney's earlier visit to the front-line states had, after all, led some to expect that Tambo would receive a rather sympathetic hearing. Instead, he was subjected to a series of tired homilies on "violence" and "communism."

That these are precisely the themes of the video is obviously more than coincidental. The video attempts, with single-minded, almost obsessive insistence, to assimilate the ANC to the twin spectres of "international communism," and its correlative, "terrorism." We are warned at the beginning that "[t]he following video contains material which may offend sensitive viewers." And it would be hard to find anyone who could watch without horror the gruesome sequences of "necklace" killings (igniting a tire round someone's neck), with the tape displays a ghoul's fascination. This is, then, the central rhetorical device of the tape: to equate opposition to the Pretoria regime, from the ANC, the UDF, the churches, and the international community, with a defence of the most shocking violence.

But what of the South African state and its violence, its terror, its denial of the most elementary human rights to its citizens? All of this remains literally invisible, if only because, for Worthington and his backers, apartheid itself no longer exists. "Nothing can justify the inhumanities of apartheid, as it existed, before the process of dismantling it began, or in fact justify the few remaining semblances of it in South African society today" the package piously announces. Apartheid, we're repeatedly assured, has been transformed: to continue to demand sanctions or to call for the release of detainees is merely to be duped by a conspiracy to bring an otherwise peaceful and progressive society under the control of "communism."

But it would be overstating the case to argue that the video was, by itself, responsible for the rather frosty tone of Tambo's reception in Ottawa. The ground had been prepared in advance. Michael Valpy commented recently on the relative success of the South African initiative to delegitimize the ANC among some sections of the Canadian public (*Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1988). Although welcome, Valpy's concerns emerged a bit late in the game, particularly in light of the *Globe's* earlier editorial enthusiasm for Gatsha Buthelezi as "the best hope, if not the only hope, for the emergence of a moderate black leadership from the ashes of apartheid" (in a Dec. 11, 1986 editorial headed "For Chief Buthelezi"!"). As for the Tory right wing, to whom Mulroney and Clark were, in no small measure, responding, they had been primed by even less sophisticated appeals to

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