

Murray Close

Mel Gibson goes native.

If the world was Britain's oyster, then Tahiti was a pearl only recently captured. Although the Tahitians were more hospitable than some other Pacific islanders to Europeans, their first encounters were difficult. Sailors used iron products (not available on these islands) to barter for sexual favors. Widespread venereal disease resulted. (After sailing to Pitcairn Island with Tahitian men and women in tow, the mutineers quarreled murderously over the women.)

The filmmakers regard the encounter between Europeans and Tahitians as "laid back." Donaldson has European and Tahitian beachcombers affect an attitude of lethargic insouciance, and one half-expects Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello to lead a sing-along around the luau.

But while Donaldson dwells on gorgeous Tahitian sunsets and sun-drenched beaches, he does little to explain why Christian and the crew mutinied once back on board the *Bounty*.

Why did they mutiny in 1789? Although momentarily at peace, Britain had been at war for many years. Its attempt to achieve naval hegemony and commercial supremacy engaged the navy in a global arms race and capitalists in a search for cheap resources and labor. The voyage of the *Bounty* was a joint venture by naval and commercial interests in England in quest of empire. Its mission was simple. The navy would transport Tahitian breadfruit plants to Jamaica, where sugar planters would use locally grown breadfruit to replace more expensive imported foodstuffs for their slaves.

Empire does not come cheap. Impoverished sailors created naval hegemony, just as plantation slaves created commercial supremacy. In the effort to keep labor costs down, the navy paid the same wages they had offered in 1650. During the 18th century, captains demanded more work aboard naval vessels and enforced discipline more stringently to accomplish this aim. Summary corporal punishment became common and punishment for infractions of the increasingly severe articles of war was savage. Sailors complained, with justification, that the navy treated them no better than slaves. Bligh may not have been uncommonly

cruel, but cruelty was increasingly common.

For the *Bounty's* crew, the breadfruit provided both motive and opportunity for mutiny. To make room for it, Bligh crowded a crew about to make a 10-month voyage home. This, along with yearning for what they had left behind and distaste for what lay ahead, provided the crew with a motive. But the breadfruit also provided a rare opportunity. Bligh had no room to carry the standard complement of marines, who would have maintained order and protected him. And Bligh's route from Tahiti to Jamaica took the mutinous crew to a part of the world where they could escape.

As tea was to Boston's patriots, breadfruit was to Bligh's crew. Immediately after seizing the *Bounty*, the mutineers dumped the breadfruit overboard. This act assumed great importance in the first two films, but little in this one—the breadfruit merely supplies ammunition for a parting shot at Bligh. (Bligh subsequently transported the breadfruit to Jamaica, but slaves refused to eat it.)

The *Bounty* mutiny was a harbinger. Mutiny and strikes (the word "strike" comes from a work stoppage by British sailors in the 1760s) increased in the years after the *Bounty's* seizure. Eight years later, during war with France, entire British fleets mutinied, raised the red flag, established republics afloat, blockaded the Thames and successfully demanded that slave-like conditions be changed. The *Bounty* mutiny was the opening salvo of a late 18th-century general strike at sea.

The film gives no hint of these events. Its narrow interpretation of the mutiny dismisses relevant history and demeans the motives of the men involved. Having dispensed with the wider historical drama, Donaldson can dwell only on lush tropical forests, sandy beaches and amorous natives.

The *Bounty* is a pretty film but a barren one. It manages to take a dramatic confrontation at sea and make it about as exciting as a *Love Boat* episode. That's too bad. The tale of Christian and Bligh is still worth telling, time and again.

Robert Schaeffer reviews movies for *Not Man Apart*, the news-magazine of *Friends of the Earth*. He wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on the seafaring proletariat in the 17th and 18th centuries.

MOVIES

A pretty but barren mutiny against history

By Robert Schaeffer

Some people think that a remake is never as good as the original. But a good yarn is always worth retelling. The latest version of the mutiny on the *Bounty*, which pairs Anthony Hopkins and Mel Gibson as William Bligh and Fletcher Christian, doesn't so much remake an old film as rewrite the history of the mutiny.

Dino De Laurentiis and director Roger Donaldson base their version on Richard Hough's *Captain Bligh and Mr. Christian* rather than on Charles Nordoff and James Hall's *Mutiny on the Bounty*. (Both the 1935 Charles Laughton-Clark Gable version and the 1962 Trevor Howard-Marlon Brando remake are based on the later book.)

The current version relies more heavily on historical documents—the *Bounty's* log and Admiralty Court records—than did the earlier films. But this version produces a less accurate history and a less entertaining film. Director Donaldson uses Hough's book to exonerate Bligh, trivialize the mutiny and reduce the dramatic narrative to a Tahitian travelogue.

Richard Nixon would do well to observe how Hollywood has rehabilitated the infamous Bligh. Donaldson portrays him as a wronged man, having to explain to a skeptical Admiralty Court how he lost his ship. In this version, Bligh is on trial and the British navy is deployed against him rather than the mutineers. In

fact, the navy eventually hanged three mutineers and drowned four. It promoted Bligh and made him governor of New South Wales, where, some years later, he precipitated another mutiny.

Anthony Hopkins portrays Bligh as an excellent navigator, a loyal friend to Christian, a fair if somewhat prudish family man and a leader—at least of the sailors he guided 2,618 miles across the Pacific in an open boat. By all accounts, Bligh was an excellent navigator. And by his own account, he was loyal, fair and brave. But Hough's account is drawn from the *Bounty's* log, which Bligh wrote. It is dangerous to judge a man only by his memoirs. Unfortunately, the mutineers were not so scrupulous with their own accounts. Few of them could write, and Christian was no James Michener.

Bligh was not the incorrigible sadist depicted by Charles Laughton. Yet this doesn't mean that the crew did not labor under extremely oppressive conditions or have reason to mutiny. The new film depicts the sailors' complaints as relatively minor. They are reluctant to leave fresh food and amorous Tahitian women behind and fear another attempt to circumnavigate Cape Horn on the way to Jamaica. Fletcher Christian's complaints are selfish and childish. He falls in love with a Tahitian princess, pouts when confined to the ship by the disciplinarian Bligh, complains that he is required to dress for dinner and agrees to lead the mutiny so that he can make his pregnant

princess an honest woman. Christian's and the crew's motives for mutiny are capricious and cowardly.

The film spends most of the time on Tahiti, rather than on board ship. Had Donaldson investigated the relations between Europeans and Tahitians, the time might have been well spent. But the relationship between voyage-weary sailors and the generous Tahitians is treated in a shallow fashion.



Salvador

Continued from page 11

A devaluation would be an immediate payoff to the agro-exporters, mostly ARENA backers, for accepting defeat in the election, according to the political scientist. Yet a devaluation would be political suicide for Duarte, especially at the beginning of his term. Even with a 10 percent wage increase, the Jesuit Central American University predicts an immediate 37 percent jump in the general price index. The recent food riots in the Dominican Republic following International Monetary Fund (IMF)-ordered austerity measures could be repeated in El Salvador if a devaluation causes prices to soar.

Thus Duarte is in a precarious position, caught between his promises and the need to accommodate the real powers of the country—the private sector, the military and the U.S. “For the next six months, Duarte will be trying to stay in power and survive,” said the political scientist.

Death-squad investigation.

Duarte's first post-election promises have been to investigate the death squads and initiate a dialog with the opposition. Investigating the death squads is a delicate matter, since it means confronting the military, which has been deeply involved. Yet the U.S. has reportedly sought to convince army chief of staff Adolfo Blandon of the importance at this time of significant moves against some officers with blatant death-squad connections. Blandon has been told that just after the elections El Salvador faces a critical moment when it needs to change its image.

Some observers expect several officers to be sacrificed—four of the officers with the most notorious death squad connections are usually named. They are Nicolas Carranza, head of the Treasury Police; Lt. Col. Adalberto Cruz, commander of Morazan Province and an outspoken ARENA supporter; Lt. Col. Dennis Moran, whose bodyguard was one of the confessed assassins of the U.S. labor advisors killed at the Sheraton Hotel and whose troops actively campaigned for ARENA in Zacatecoluca; and Lt. Col. Roberto Staben, who joined D'Aubuisson in a 1980 coup attempt and presently heads the U.S.-trained ARCE battalion. While any action against a military officer is significant in El Salvador, the removal of four officers barely scratches the surface.

Duarte's promise to negotiate will likely produce even fewer results. He claims he will talk to the left but only after he has done away with the social injustices that have caused the conflict. Then, Duarte says, the guerrillas will come out of the hills and participate in the democratic process. The only guerrillas who remain there will be a few hardcore delinquents, according to Duarte.

This formulation repeats the Reagan administration's position that the only point it will negotiate with the left is its participation in elections. The FDR-FMLN has already rejected this position, calling for negotiations leading to a “government of broad participation” that will restructure the armed forces, institute reforms and prepare for general elections. Duarte's position, in effect, rejects any dialog with the left.

Even if he were serious about negotiations, neither the military nor the U.S. would permit it. Neither have any interest in negotiations that might lead to a coalition government that they fear could wind up being dominated by the left.

Nevertheless, some observers expect a flurry of diplomatic activity, meetings with the FMLN and shuttle diplomacy by Reagan's special presidential envoy—all timed to give the impression of movement toward a peaceful solution during Reagan's re-election campaign. Yet from the outset, such negotiations are unlikely to achieve any success.

Instead, Duarte has given the Reagan administration the moderate front it needs to pursue its military campaign against the FMLN. With substantive negotiations unlikely, the conflict will continue on the battlefield. If the FMLN can

break the present stalemate and continue its previous growth, the only options the U.S. will face are to negotiate, admit defeat or intervene more directly. Despite his protestations last week, Duarte may be, as the FMLN claims, the president installed by the Reagan administration to request direct intervention.

Miners

Continued from page 9

(Manchester) “should be regarded as outrageous in a democratic society.”

Police maintain roadblocks on all major roads leading into the Nottinghamshire and Lancashire coalfields. Drivers are stopped, questioned and refused permission to drive on unless they convince the police that they are not pickets. Those that object are arrested for “obstruction.” Arrested men are not being tried but released by the courts on bail on condition that they do not picket again.

Bill Ross, a faceworker at Maltby, showed this reporter a pass issued by his union officers. He has been arrested twice but not charged. After the first arrest Ross spent three weeks wearing a cervical collar. Now he must show police his pass, stating that he is not a picket but is engaged on other valid union business, to gain access to Nottinghamshire. “It is getting like South Africa,” he told *In These Times*. “Black miners have to have a pass to leave their own township, and we need a pass to get out of Maltby.”

The police have arrested four leading miners' union officers and two Labour MPs. The secretary of the Notts NUM was released when police (who had manhandled him) found out who he was. One of the Labour MPs was also released. Hundreds of miners have been arrested, usually charged with obstruction or assault. Some miners have been strip-searched at the roadside, while others have been systematically questioned in police stations about their political beliefs.

The miners are also increasingly bitter against the press. When one miner was killed while picketing, broadcast and newspaper journalists were more concerned with the fact that he had been arrested earlier after a soccer match than with the manner of his death. Ludicrous allegations have been made against militant miners' leaders, including the charge that one of Arthur Scargill's research officers is a “foreigner” (like MacGregor, she is American).

Strikebreaking may dwindle now that the dispute has turned into a national miners' strike. Tactically, the NUM leaders may have erred in not permitting a ballot, but the dispute is now well under way, and a vote would seem a little late at this stage. Besides, opinion polls show that a majority of miners support the strike. Although the flying pickets will now focus more on docks and power stations than on the few pits where scabbing continues, clearly heavy-handed policing will go on.

Harsh signs of poverty are already visible in the mining areas. Cardboard collecting boxes are in the corners of most supermarkets, videos and home computers have been returned to rental agencies, crowds at soccer matches have shrunk. Several Labour-controlled town councils are giving free dinners to miners' children.

Community support.

At the same time, communities are giving a heartening degree of support to the strike. Meetings and concerts have been packed. Miners collecting money in the streets of Sheffield reckoned that they had received an average of more than a pound from each person they approached.

Nowhere is the degree of community support clearer than among the miners' families. Token strikes have occurred at three South Yorkshire schools in sympathy with the miners, old-age pensioners have given freely to strike funds. For perhaps the first time in any British mining dispute, the women of the coalfields have

organized to support the menfolk, rather than leaving the strike to their husbands.

In some areas, women were involved before the dispute started. They were prominent in Durham, for example, in the Save Easington Area Mines campaign. Later, women organized on an impromptu basis after seeing newspaper reports claiming that miners' wives opposed the strike. Kent women organized after an argument in a ladies' skittles team. In Sheffield and Barnsley there has been explicitly feminist participation. And on May 12, 8,000 women demonstrated in Barnsley to support the strike.

The women's groups are highly successful in collecting food and money and raising morale. They have also ended the press reports about miners' wives. And they have started to pressure their husbands to see the struggle through. Severance payments might buy a cottage for the man involved, but pit closure would mean the dole queue for his sons and daughters.

The women's groups have challenged attitudes in this most male of all British industries. When Jack Collins, secretary of the Kent miners, accused Nottinghamshire miners of “hiding behind their wives' skirts,” he was rebuked by Arthur Scargill on two grounds—first, because 6,000 Nottinghamshire men had already joined the strike, and second, because the women's support had been “fantastic.” The audience loudly applauded this.

Women must also confront basic problems of sexism on the picket lines. One miner's wife recently reprimanded a group of miners who had been jeering female office workers. “How can you expect me to support you if you don't take us seriously?” she asked.

To succeed, the miners will need support from the rest of the labor movement. Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, a miner's son, has been lukewarm in his support for the NUM. Nor was the Trades Union Congress keen to become involved while miners were crossing their own picket lines. Even so, the transport unions have urged their members to refuse to handle coal and several ports have turned imported coal away, while Nottinghamshire railway workers have been disciplined for obstructing coal trucks. Unions in Eastern-bloc countries such as Poland recently agreed to halt coal exports to England.

The strike is hardly likely to bring the government down, as its predecessor did in 1974. It may not even be winnable. The best outcome, from the miners' point of view, would be assurance from the government of further massive subsidy to the industry and Coal Board agreement not to proceed with its closure program. Yet this was precisely the compromise reached in February 1981.

The miners know that all they can achieve is another delay. But many of them no longer care if the industry is damaged by the strike. If they are going to go down in defeat, at least they want to go down fighting.

John Field works in labor education at Northern College, South Yorkshire, and has close connections with the Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire areas of the NUM. Donations for strike support can be sent to: National Union of Mineworkers, St. James' House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England.

Crisis

Continued from page 17

to operate well below full productive capacity for a protracted period of time. Apart from the human costs, such underutilization of existing productive equipment depresses both productivity and investment, undermining the potential for future growth. Wage austerity also has a variety of counter-productive effects on both management initiative and worker effort (which we shall explore later in this series).

And yet the essential content of the redistributive trickle-down strategy—the notion that raising business profitability is the key to stimulating investment and growth, and that to do this workers will

have to accept a period of austerity—has become the conventional economic wisdom of a large part of the political spectrum in the U.S. To develop an alternative economic strategy, we must reject the misguided logic of the conventional wisdom and demonstrate the potential for recovery inherent in the waste that now pervades our society.

As we shall see in subsequent articles in this series, this will require us to challenge the bottom-line priority of corporate profitability; for it is this, rather than mismanagement, that is fundamentally responsible for the current economic crisis.

Sam Bowles, David Gordon and Thomas Weisskopf co-authored *Beyond the Wasteland*, published this year by Anchor/Doubleday Press.

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Werner

Continued from page 24

Classes are offered to families on sanitation, personal hygiene, the causes of illness and treatment. More important, the Piaxtla team trains rural workers who are selected and partially financed by their respective villages. The workers not only learn preventive and curative health care, but also community organizing techniques and problem solving.

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and hold a refresher course or introduce new techniques. The effort has drastically reduced sickness, especially among infants.

Werner's grass-roots organization calculatingly challenges the existing power elite. "Projimo has no problems because everyone wants to help the children," he says. "Piaxtla has problems because it encourages and organizes villagers to fight for their rights."

Originally Werner only meant to teach health care. But as he became familiar with the daily travails of the residents, usually involving landowners and the government, he began to see the connection of health to the social and economic structure. Gradually he came to believe that genuine health improvements required a fundamental change in that

structure.

"There's no such thing as apolitical," he explains. "Where inequities exist, not to take a stand is to side tacitly with abuse. It's a political nonact. Anyone seriously involved with the poor can't help but fight against injustices."

Werner's position has not made him or his programs popular in some Mexican circles. He and the village health workers have been arrested numerous times for criticizing the government, protesting official corruption or openly opposing those who traditionally have controlled the local economy. "Political activity always results in an escalation of harassment," he says.

That attitude also extends to international affairs and tends to restrict the amount of money Werner receives in

IN THESE TIMES MAY 30-JUNE 12, 1984 23 donations. Except for the Peace Corps, he will not accept grants from the federal government because of U.S. support for Third World dictatorships, especially in Latin America. Nor will he accept funds from corporations that actively or passively promote these policies.

While Werner says the foundation can always use more funds, because of book sales and philanthropic contributions, it does not have to struggle to reach its \$300,000 annual operation budget. *Where There Is No Doctor* and its medical companions continue to increase in popularity worldwide.

James Evans works for the California State Bar Association.

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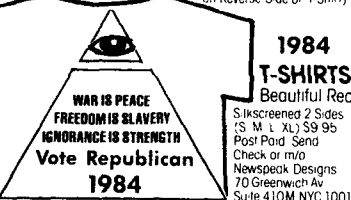
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WHERE THERE'S



NO DOCTOR

By James Evans

David Werner never intended to be a revolutionary when he hiked into the mountains overlooking Mazatlan, Mexico, 20 years ago.

A 29-year-old teacher at an alternative high school in Palo Alto, Calif., Werner went to Mexico to observe birds and plants. What he saw there changed his life and the lives of the villagers he met. It also resulted in *Where There Is No Doctor*, a practical medical guide that has been translated into 23 languages with a distribution of more than a million copies in 115 countries.

"People were so poor and yet so generous," he recalls. "One family invited me to sleep inside because of the chill, and it got so cold they lit a fire in the middle of the night to warm the children. I talked with them but couldn't really see them. In the morning I saw these health problems—things like goiters and infected cuts that could be cured with simple remedies. People there were self-sufficient, but they didn't have knowledge of Western medical science."

Werner returned to his school and consulted with doctors as to what medicines and supplements would be appropriate for the ailments he had seen. He then re-

cruited teenage student volunteers, and together they developed first-aid kits that fit inside large coffee cans and included color-coded directions for easy reference, illustrated by Werner's own cartoons. Next he organized an extended field trip to the mountains, where the volunteers gave a can to each key family in a village.

Recognizing that one can would not go far and determined to provide genuine aid to the villagers, he decided to make the trek into the rugged region regularly with his volunteers, selling his Japanese brush paintings to buy supplies. Within four years he institutionalized his efforts by acquiring the Hesperian Foundation, which had been established to help Biafran refugees. He also convinced a group of Stanford University doctors to go into the area to do corrective work on cleft palates and other deformities.

After six years of a continually expanding program, Werner realized his first-aid instructions were constantly being rewritten, because they were either lost or became too tattered to read. "I decided to write a pamphlet that would hold up longer," he explains, "and I kept thinking of more things to put in it, and so it grew into a book."

Using funds from a private grant, he published *Donde No Hay Doctor* in 1973.

The book was written for villagers Werner knew, but the exhaustive yet simply explained material was immediately recognized as applicable to any undeveloped area of the world.

It covers almost everything associated with the human body, from childbirth and infant nutrition to snake bites and tropical diseases, with sections added or revised for specific cultures. The Arabic edition, for instance, has no pictures of pigs, and the Filipino version shows acupuncture points. The book is considered valuable enough to have been stolen in volume and sold on the black market. In one incident in Africa, an entire truckload of French translations was stolen and quickly sold at a street bazaar.

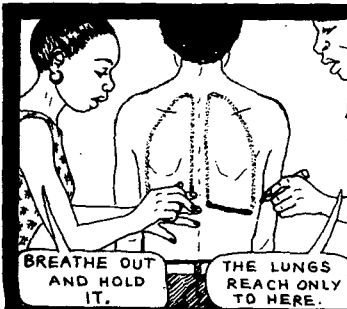
In 1977 the first English printing appeared, and the Peace Corps snapped it up. Now each Peace Corps volunteer receives a copy, and the organization makes copies available in local languages. The books earn about \$40,000 a year from sales, but Werner allows full reproduction without royalty payments if the book is given free to people. When he charges, he sets the price on a sliding scale tied to a company's or individual's ability to pay. All proceeds go to the Hesperian Foundation which, besides revising *Where There Is No Doctor* every few years, publishes

Where There Is No Dentist—by Murray Dickson and *Helping Healthy Workers Learn* by Werner and Bill Bower.

Werner's "revolutionary" influence comes mainly from two other Hesperian programs. The first, Project Projimo, developed as a result of his belief that sending physicians from the U.S. into rural Mexico retarded efforts to train villagers to deal with medical problems. American doctors still visit, but only to train, not to provide care. While that decision accords with Werner's self-help philosophy, it does not provide for low-cost surgery, especially on children with motor deformities from polio and other diseases. So Project Projimo brings children to the Shriners' Hospital in San Francisco, where they receive free corrective surgery and therapy.

The second program is Project Piaxtla, a health-care network that covers a 5,000 square-mile region and serves more than 10,000 residents in the roadless mountains. It is entirely managed and staffed by local villagers, who attend to 98 percent of the health problems they see, despite no formal medical training. For more serious ailments, a referral system sends patients to competent and reasonable doctors in the nearest city. The program emphasizes preventive medicine and health education.

Continued on page 23



David Werner's tips for barefoot practitioners

