

By Joel Bleifuss

The Three Mile Island of 1957

The full story of the October 1957 fire at the Windscale nuclear plant (now known as Sellafield) in Cumbria County, England is still coming out. James Lewis reports in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* that the official report on the accident, released in early January, disclosed that then-Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had the government's investigation rewritten to downplay the seriousness of the accident. The Windscale fire released a radioactive cloud that contained more than 600 times more radioactive radio-iodine than that released at Three Mile Island. The report further says that radioactive milk, contaminated at up to three times the official danger level, was released for human consumption as was contaminated meat from lambs that grazed in the area. The details of the accident were not even made known to the ministers who have been in charge of British nuclear policy in the years since the accident. Lewis reports that Macmillan covered up the disaster because he "feared that confidence in the nuclear industry would be undermined, and that Britain's nuclear links with the U.S. would be jeopardized by revelations of serious defects in the organization of the Atomic Energy Authority, which ran the plant." According to a number of published reports, the area around the plant was heavily contaminated with radioactivity, especially polonium, a super-radioactive material used as the primer for nuclear bombs. One town of 2,000 near the plant has had 11 cases of childhood cancer since the accident, including five cases of childhood leukemia, according to reports. Throughout west Cumbria, the cancer incidence among males of all ages increased 30 percent between 1971 and 1984. And according to a preliminary report in *New Scientist*, a British publication, there could in the end be 1,200 cases of leukemia and 8,000 cancer deaths attributable to the Windscale disaster.

Secrets of the empire

People for the American Way, a Washington-based liberal advocacy group, investigated the Reagan administration's use of executive powers and came to the conclusion that the U.S. has "a government operating in secret." The group's 100-page report, *Government Secrecy: Decisions Without Democracy*, opens with a preface by historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. He writes: "Secrecy is the bane of democracy because it is the enemy of accountability... The secrecy system, as it has been nurtured by the executive branch over the last 40 years and with special zeal over the last 7 years, is the indispensable ally and instrument of the imperial presidency." What has the imperial presidency of Ronald Reagan been up to? For starters the report's author, Steven L. Katz, writes that the Reagan administration has transcended the democratic process "to advance secretly its policy goals, issuing hundreds of secret laws—secret even from Congress." These laws made by executive order are called "National Security Decision Directives" (NSDDs). Some of these directives have been made public, though through no help of the administration. In 1981 Reagan sent, via an NSDD, an estimated \$50 million to the Argentine junta for covert training of the Nicaraguan contras. In 1983 he gave the CIA authority to train and support secret counterterrorist squads. These counterterrorists are to be used in "pre-emptive strikes" in the Middle East. In 1985 Reagan gave permission to agencies other than the CIA to conduct covert operations, agencies like the National Security Council of Iran-contra fame. In 1986 Reagan authorized the Libyan "disinformation" campaign. No one knows for sure exactly how many of these presidential edicts exist, but since he ascended to the throne, Reagan has issued at least 280 secret laws, about one every nine days. (In that same period he has held 42 press conferences, about one every 60 days.) How does he do it, this man who finds it impossible to converse without the aid of cue cards? More to the point, is it really Ronald Reagan who is issuing these executive directives?

The numbers speak

Common Cause Magazine recently published the following statistics. The information was obtained from the Justice Department's "Public Integrity Section of Criminal Division Annual Report to Congress."

	1975	1985
Federal officials who are:		
indicted	53	563
convicted	43	470
awaiting trial	5	90



Indignant eyes: San Diego civic boosters condemn this poster as "tasteless," "offensive" and "inappropriate."

Public art touches reactionary nerves in San Diego

SAN DIEGO—Is San Diego truly, as its official slogan proclaims, "America's Finest City"? Apparently not, if you're Mexican. That's the word from local artists, whose controversial poster dramatizes the plight of immigrant Mexican workers.

The poster was designed by three artists, Elizabeth Sisco, Louis Hock and David Avalo, who through their art depict the struggles of poor Mexicans living in this border region. Since January 3, their poster has been displayed on the backs of 100 city buses.

The images on the poster portray three scenes common in Southern California: a Mexican washing dishes in a restaurant; a Mexican maid entering a hotel room; and Immigration and Naturalization Service officials handcuffing Mexican immigrants. Across the top of the poster are the words, "Welcome to America's Finest Tourist Plantation."

This takeoff on the city slogan has enraged local residents and city officials.

"We wanted to make a completely unavoidable image," Louis Hock told the *San Diego Union*. In a city where a Mexican maid is a coveted symbol of affluence and where Mexicans are commonly referred to in the newspaper as "aliens," such a poster was bound to cause trouble.

The poster "is a tasteless parody of the slogan with a message that San Diegians have reason to find offensive," editorialized the notoriously right-wing *San Diego Union*. In the weeks since the poster appeared, over 15 have been vandalized or stolen.

Mayor Maureen O'Connor wants to make sure nothing like this happens again. She has proposed replacing COMBO, the arts organization that administered grant money for this public project, with a city-run commission on arts and culture that would approve all public art. City officials are particularly upset because the posters are scheduled to remain on the buses through January 31 when thousands of tourists arrive for the Super Bowl.

Like much of Southern California, San Diego is heavily dependent on tourist dollars and defense spending.

Most white residents remain happily oblivious to the problem of a growing Hispanic underclass.

"The poster was inappropriate to be displayed on city buses," says Paul Downey, press secretary for Mayor O'Connor. "It is offensive to the general community. Our office has received many calls about it, including some from minorities." As artist Elizabeth Sisco told the *Union*, "Certain subjects are taboo, negative for this city." Indeed one of artist David Avalo's previous projects that had been displayed at a government office building was ordered scrapped by a judge who didn't like it.

But, Julie Scaramella, spokeswoman for the Centro Cultural De Raza, where Avalo works, said "The city has really missed the boat on this. Here is their chance to say, 'Yes, we have some problems.' Instead they are overreacting."

Despite official condemnation, Scaramella says the Centro has been besieged by callers supporting the poster and requesting a copy. "We've gotten calls from all over the country," she says. "Several people have said they want a copy at any cost."

—Darcy DeMarco

Switzerland's secret crusade against the gypsies

For almost half a century, Swiss authorities, in collusion with a private foundation set up to assist the Swiss youth, *Pro Juventute*, have secretly tried to eradicate the roving life of Switzerland's gypsies and, ultimately, the gypsies themselves as a distinct ethnic group. Between 1927 and 1973, the Swiss government, state governments and the board of *Pro Juventute* tried to forcibly settle Switzerland's gypsies. They regarded the gypsies' "nomadic" lifestyle as social evil. A "psychopathological behavior" that is "contrary to our Western civilized society" was how a man who now heads a psychiatric clinic in Chur, Switzerland, once put it.

land, once put it.

During the eradication effort, the benevolent-sounding organization *Kinder der Landstrasse* (Children of the Highways) took hundreds of children away from their gypsy parents. Whole families and clans were mercilessly torn apart. Many children and teen-agers, instead of being placed with "normal" families, were put in reform schools, psychiatric clinics and even, without having committed any crimes, in labor camps and prisons. Often the children's names were changed or they were given up for adoption without the knowledge of their gypsy parents.

The Swiss gypsies call themselves the "travelling people" or *Jenische*. They make a living mostly as door-to-door small merchants, by sharpening knives and scissors, by mak-

ing baskets and recycling trash. They live in campers, travelling from town to town, having to get a permission to stay for a few days at a time from the authorities of each town. Such a permission is often denied or only grudgingly granted with a lot of restrictions.

This official, but highly secret, policy of eradicating the "inferior" and "sick" gypsy way of life only came to an end when it was exposed by the Swiss magazine *Beobachter* in 1972. For the next 15 years, however, both the Swiss government and *Pro Juventute* kept silent on the whole affair. All the relevant official documents were kept under lock and key and no official apologies were made. It was only in 1986 that the Swiss government finally extended an official apology to the *Jenische*. It took *Pro Juventute*, after much prodding,

a year more to do likewise.

The government also finally allowed a Swiss historian, Thomas Huonker, limited access to the relevant documents so that he could write a historical study of this sordid affair. Even though Huonker could not examine the most important files, what he did find and then publish in his short study was damning enough. The historian revealed two months ago that in persecuting the gypsies, Swiss authorities collaborated closely with Nazi Germany, whose policy it was to eradicate all gypsies. For example, in 1936 Switzerland joined the "International Central Authority for Fighting Gypsy Mischief," an outfit created by the Nazi police to garner support from neighboring countries for the Nazi policy of gypsy extermination. Following the authority's guidelines, the Swiss government collected voluminous and highly detailed files on all Swiss *Jenische*.

The Swiss government's ideologi-

cal justification for persecuting the *Jenische* was borrowed straight from Nazi race ideology that categorized the gypsies with such terms as "anti-social," "imbecile," and "parasitic." Huonker also discovered that *Pro Juventute*'s former president, Gen. Ulrich Wille, and Alfred Siegfried, the man who headed *Kinder der Landstrasse* had close ties to Nazi officials like Robert Ritter, head of a Nazi gypsy "research" institute.

Moreover, the Swiss historian found evidence of the systematic mistreatment of *Jenische* by Swiss police, prison authorities and the personnel of state psychiatric hospitals. There are indications that in the infamous Bellechasse prison in Fribourg, where brutality against inmates was routine, there were a number of suspicious deaths among gypsy inmates. A similar case recently came to light in Zurich, and the Zurich government responded by putting the relevant documents under lock and key for 70 years.

The federal government in Bern is not eager either to open up these files to public scrutiny. It has proposed setting up a commission to which the *Jenische* could apply for permission to look at the government's records. However, the *Jenische* would not be represented on the commission, and the commission would not have the final say. It could only recommend to the state governments that certain files be opened. The states would make the final decision. But how likely is it that the state governments that were part and parcel of the gypsies' persecution are going to allow full and free access to the relevant files?

For *Beobachter* magazine, this whole shameful affair raises an "exemplary and ever-fresh question: How do we treat minorities in our country when they can no longer be used for show, when they become inconvenient or when they attract unpleasant attention to everyday life?"

-Reto Pieth

Norwegian pacifists put bomb on docket

The signing of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in December banned U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles from the European land mass, but did nothing to limit the fearsome nuclear chess game being played out in the North Atlantic.

Peace activists are therefore delighted that the Norwegian pacifist monthly *Ikkevold* (Nonviolence) was recently cleared of spy charges after a four-year legal battle. "Much more than free speech is at stake," says Dorie Wilsnack of War Resisters International, with which *Ikkevold* is affiliated. "The *Ikkevold* people were really arrested for exposing the myth of Norwegian neutrality in America's enormous North Atlantic naval buildup."

The September 1983 article that got *Ikkevold* editors indicted disclosed the location of a U.S. submarine-detection base on Andoya Island in northern Norway. Because of its location barring the route Soviet submarines take to enter the Atlantic from their bases near Murmansk, the system would be on the front line of a wartime attack on the Soviet Union's Arctic forces.

A month after the article appeared, more than 50 officers of the national security police raided *Ikkevold*'s office and the homes of its staff and carted off 400 pounds of files. The editors were charged with "damaging state security on an international level" by gathering and releasing secret information.

The raids were the first of their kind since the Nazis occupied Norway. In the weeks that followed Norway's press took up the story. Concern spread from journalists and lawyers to the whole population.

The affair was particularly curious because the existence of the Andoya network was no secret outside Nor-

way. For example, an article on anti-submarine warfare in the February 1981 *Scientific American* contains a map that clearly shows a submarine detection system in operation near Andoya.

Observers contended that the offending *Ikkevold* piece deeply embarrassed the government by exposing the permanent basing of foreign troops on Norwegian soil and the connection of these troops to U.S. nuclear forces. Nuclear weapons and foreign bases have been prohibited in Norway for decades. This prohibition served to both mute criticism of NATO membership and disengage the Norwegian public from the international debate over nuclear arms.

When the case was first heard in May 1985, seven *Ikkevold* staffers were found guilty. One editor, Ivar Johansen, was ordered to serve nine months in jail and fined \$1,200. The rest received suspended sentences. A Norwegian Court-ordered retrial in December 1986 resulted in the seven getting jail terms of from two to six months, with two years probation. But when it unanimously set

aside these verdicts last August, the Supreme Court ruled that although the Andoya station was not common knowledge, the defendants had discovered its presence using "straight-forward journalistic methods." The judges further said this type of activity is "socially valuable and not criminal." The court concluded that "if the military wants to hold something secret, then it is up to the military to keep the secret....It cannot hold journalists accountable for uncovering such things."

Although legal problems have taken up much of the Norwegian War Resisters' time and energy over the last three years, Ivar Johansen is gratified by the results. "The central issue of critical journalism on defense and national security matters was examined," he says. "This is a good example that such a case can be won if you work hard."

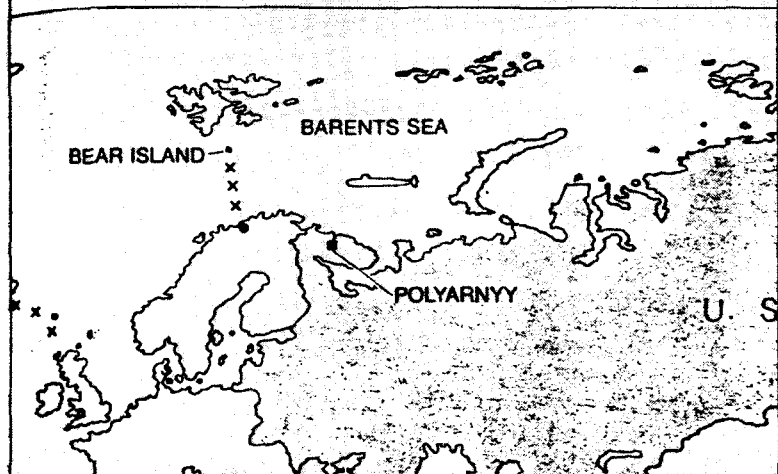
Ikkevold is now free to focus its energies on its "Bomb-Target Norway" campaign that stresses the risks Norway runs by participating in the North Atlantic arms race.

-David Gilden

Some secret: In 1983 Norwegian pacifists were taken to court for exposing the existence of a U.S. submarine-detection base. The base is shown here on a map published by *Scientific American* in 1981.

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Something to smile about

At the January 15 Democratic candidates' televised debate in Des Moines was a face that hasn't been seen much around Iowa—Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee. Having abandoned Iowa to the liberals, Gore has shifted the focus of his campaign to the more conservative South. "Al, it's good to see you back," said former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt. "You know I thought they might start putting your picture on milk cartons." A good jibe, but as the *Chicago Tribune's* Philip Lentz and Dorothy Collin observed, one that might "fall flat in Iowa where milk cartons were used as part of a nationwide attempt to find missing [Des Moines] *Register* newspaper boy Johnny Gosch."

Let me count the ways

An Israeli Foreign Ministry official has said that his office, in response to criticism of Israel's handling of the Palestinian rebellion, has come up with a press release titled "Ten ways Israel is not like South Africa." The *New York Times's* John Kifner, who reported this, failed to elaborate. The Israeli Embassy in Washington was no help either. What are those "ten ways Israel is not like South Africa"? Remove the "not" and the question is a little easier to answer.

How about 12 ways

There are of course differences between Israel and South Africa. But there are also disturbing similarities, which are giving some Jews in the U.S. cause to reexamine their formerly uncritical support of Israel. How are Israel and South Africa alike?

- 1.) In an attempt to quell public protests, both countries have sealed off communities and imposed curfews.
- 2.) Israel and South Africa both persecute journalists, limit press access to strife-torn areas and justify government censorship on national security grounds.
- 3.) Both governments forbid their ethnic opponents to display flags and other expressions of nationalism.
- 4.) The two countries both restrict the ability to hold funerals for those killed in the rebellion.
- 5.) In an attempt to control dissent, both Israel and South Africa operate a gulag of a judicial system. (Israel in its occupied territories.)
- 6.) The two countries have developed extensive, interlocking, weapons industries.
- 7.) Israel and South Africa have reportedly worked together to develop nuclear weapons.
- 8.) The economies of the two countries both depend on the labor of low-paid workers who are not allowed to live in the cities where they work.
- 9.) The rebellions in both countries are fueled by the rage of youth who believe they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. These young people are convinced that the more moderate resistance of their parents has accomplished nothing.
- 10.) Both Israel and South Africa have defied United Nations resolutions calling respectively for recognition of Palestinian rights and independence for Namibia.
- 11.) The two countries are surrounded by neighboring states ethnically related to the populations being suppressed. Both Israel and South Africa have been at war with their neighbors.
- 12.) Israel and South Africa both have gotten a lot of mileage out of identifying themselves as America's allies in the crusade against the two great evils—"international terrorism" and "world communism."

Hi-tech behavior mod

"You're not working as fast as the person next to you," reads the message that flashes on the computer screen. Welcome to the brave new world of worker-control through subliminal suggestion. Arnold Hamilton of the *San Jose Mercury News* reported last fall on a new growth industry—software packages that help businesses manage their employees through subliminal messages. These messages are flashed upon video display terminals. Some of them exhort the worker to "relax," thereby lowering stress and upping productivity. Other of these subliminal suggestions, say Hamilton, "subtly offer positive slogans about the employer and the work place." Last fall, Democratic California Assemblyman Tom Hayden got the Democratic legislature to pass a bill that would have banned the use of subliminal messages that were not worker-approved. But Republican Gov. George Deukmejian supports free enterprise. He vetoed the proposal.