

FREE BUDDY COCHRAN

Don't watch fascism; fight it

By Mark Brothers

The California Reich. Directed by Walter Parkes and Keith Critchlow. An International Releasing Corporation Release.

Filmmakers Walter Parkes and Keith Critchlow spent three months interviewing and researching members of the National Socialist White People's Party, after convincing the nazi group they were making a supportive propaganda documentary.

What the liberal filmmakers really hoped to produce was an objective account of contemporary American fascism, unfettered by editorial comments or opposing viewpoints. The reality of the nazis, they apparently believed, would make *The California Reich* objectively anti-fascist.

But, while reality is largely spontaneous, film is organized, edited and packaged. Film cannot be objective; its entire production process is a series of subjective choices—camera angles, the sequence of events chosen, the lighting used, where the emphasis is placed.

While *The California Reich* is certainly not a pro-nazi film, it does not really confront nazism and packs even less punch than, say, such 1930's Hollywood anti-fascist non-epics as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and *Black Legion*.

The film does include a couple of strong scenes. The shots of four-year-olds mouthing racist shit and preparing to do battle with Blacks and Jews is particularly powerful. But what the filmmakers don't show is much more significant.

While the film ends with quotes from 1923 New York Times editorials dismissing the nazis as "comic opera... boyscouts on an outing," Parkes and Critchlow ignore their own hindsight by characterizing the nazis throughout the entire film, as a squad of Hogan's Hero-style buffoons.

They show a woman baking a nauseous looking cake decorated with a swastika made from melted licorice; a Christmas party led by a Santa with an armband; 20 or 30 jerks pledging allegiance to Hitler; storm troopers losing their swastikas and bumbling their goose steps and...

They make no attempt to seriously examine the American nazis' politics and their brutality. They don't mention nazis like the one in New Rochelle who murdered six people when he went on a shooting spree, or the one who recently killed a Chicago Jew by forcing him to inhale a poison gas used in Hitler's concentration camps. Nor do they talk about the nazis who terrorize Blacks in the Marquette Park area of Chicago, or about the racist attacks continually carried out by nazis, and other fascist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, in prisons and military bases throughout the United States.

The filmmakers don't show any of the nazis'

political discussions on tactics or fascist theory (if indeed they have any theory). To them, the nazis are just goofy psychopaths, suffering from "loneliness" or some other personal malaise. Like most good liberals, Critchlow and Parkes regard political extremists (either left or right) as psychologically-crippled individuals rather than as people involved in a social/economic phenomenon.

While the filmmakers recognize the psychosis of the nazis, they also consider them to be largely "ordinary" Americans. And much of their racism is common in a country that boasts an imbedded national legacy of white supremacy. One nazi in the film says that the other workers at a warehouse where he is employed are "sneaky nazis... they could really be something... they'd really be the cruel ones."

The filmmakers version of "ordinary Americans" is just a short step from what Anita Bryant calls the "normal majority." When new leftist activity slackened in the early 1970's, Nixon had hoped to drive American consciousness back to pre-sixties values. Watergate stopped him. Now Nixon's "silent majority" has become Bryant's sexist, jingoistic, anti-intellectual, white supremacist, anti-semitic "normal majority."

Because of the "abnormalities" of the past few years, (military defeat, the feminist and gay movements, Black struggles, hip culture, freer sexuality, disintegration of the family unit), the pre-sixties middle class finds itself a less dynamic cultural and economic force. As a reaction against these changes, the far right has emerged as a growing, vocal, organized defender of the family, the death penalty, right-to-work laws; opponent of busing, the equal rights amendment, abortion and gays. Already it has won the repeal of the gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida, and cut off Medicaid that poor women needed for abortions.

Much of the right's activities are organized by election-oriented groups like the National Conservative Political Action Committee and the Committee for Survival of a Free Congress (which claims 121 members of congress in its camp), or single issue groups such as Bryant's Save Our Children and the numerous Right-to-Life organizations.

There is a mutually-reinforcing relationship between these "respectable" rightists and the fascists who maintain a subversive image (nazis, KKK). The larger, issue-oriented organizations provided a potential mass base for the openly fascist groups who, in turn, often act as the fighting shock troops in campaigns around such issues as busing.

In *The California Reich*, a nazi, who is a sergeant in the U.S. army, comments, "I'd give anything if my green uniform had a swastika on it." Both the nazi and the filmmakers missed the point: he's *already* wearing the



British anti-fascists take control of streets and disrupt march of neo-Nazi National Front in Lewisham, London, in August.

green uniform. While the American government acts as though it barely tolerates the nazis, it is more than willing to use them as storm troopers to intimidate "subversives." Just note that during the recent battles between English anti-fascists and the fascist National Front, thousands of police rallied around in defense of the Front. One should also note that the English comrades stopped the fascists from marching and injured 115 cops in the process.

The sole purpose of the fascists is to grow to the point where they can carry out their genocidal pigshit, and to smash them, all us abnormal folk—Leftists, Freeks, Prisoners, Gays, Feminists, Jews, Indians, Blacks and other Third World People—have to join together and kick their ass wherever they show up. As Hitler conceded, "only one thing could have stopped our movement—if our adversaries had understood its principle and, from the first day, had smashed

with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement."

People have begun to fight the new fascist movement in America as well. In Chicago anti-nazi coalitions organized large rallies which have stopped nazi marches; when nazis attacked demonstrators picketing their Chicago headquarters, four nazis and a cop were hospitalized; a San Francisco nazi bookstore was sacked and burned by people from

the Jewish community; in July two nazis were killed (one Black also died) in battles between nazis and Black Muslims in San Quentin prison; a July 4th Columbus, Ohio, Klan rally was scuttled when it was attacked by demonstrators; and, also in July, Buddy Cochran, a white southerner, drove his car into the midst of a Plains, Georgia, KKK rally, injuring 32.

Let a thousand Buddy Cochrans start their engines.

There's a rumour going 'round

By Frankie Lee

"I met people... their strength, humour and memory moved me... this collection of musical workings is dedicated to those Canadians who struggled with natural disaster, a collapsing system, pathetic leadership into the great depression and through a world war... and survived!"

That's what the music on Perth County Conspiracy's (does not exist) *Ten Lost Years* and *Then Some* is all about—survival (according to musician Cedric Smith who worked on the project). Released in the fall of 1976 by rural Ontario's homegrown Rumour Records, the album contains music originally written for the play, *Ten Lost Years*, which was in turn adapted from Barry Broadfoot's book of the same name. The music by Perth County Conspiracy (does not exist) accompanied dramatizations of Broadfoot's interviews with survivors of the depression years from 1930 to 1940 in Canada.

The album's liner notes quote Canadian folk-hero Norman Bethune, himself a participant of both the Spanish and Chinese revolutions—"The function of the artist is to disturb. His duty is to arouse the sleepers, to shake the complacent pillars of the world." PCCdne's poetic lyrics and use of instruments such as the mandolin, violin, autoharp and psaltry reach the listener not through the

intellect but through the images and feelings they convey.

The music reflects the ambiguity of the people's response to the bad times, which few understood and many had to bear passively: "Mama said we can't stay no more/Got to leave the land, close and lock the door/Leave our friends, pack and move away/Maybe we'll all come back some day."

Although not specifically in the tradition of social protest, the album makes effective use of the documentary-drama mode—an attempt to create a popular culture by listening to people, gathering their experience and returning it to them in words and music.

Drought, dust storms, few jobs and pay cuts for those lucky enough to be working all took their toll in the Depression years. Sometimes the radio was the only diversion: "Hey, hey it's fantasy radio hour/Time to wipe those tears away/We'll help you smile, laugh and forget/You won't even notice you've a smaller pay cheque."

Though there was little chance a social revolution would end the miseries of the Depression, one of the album's weaknesses is its failure to portray the individual and collective struggles that did take place. Strikes occurred in the relief camps, and the album makes no mention of the On-to-Ottawa trek, in which thousands of jobless people rode the rails

across the country to demonstrate in front of the Parliament Buildings. The trek ended with a bloody confrontation between unemployed workers and the RCMP, who arrested ringleaders in Regina and met the surviving trekkers in Ottawa armed with riot equipment. Scores of arrests, injuries to many and the death of one policeman were the final results.

But in the end it was neither the actions of the farmers and workers nor the government which ended the Depression, but the start of the war in Europe: "The freight cars were rough/I sure had enough/Of soup lines and taking the dole /And the mad dogs of Europe bark at the moon/And we're lining up to go."

The other side of the album is similar in style, but reflects the more characteristic subject matter and style of PCCdne. A blend of poetry, folk and country music, and politics, the selections range from "Pentagon Squares," a commemoration and celebration of the U.S. defeat in Southeast Asia, to "Harvey's Song," written about an old farmer-friend.

The album is a product of an actor / musician / humourist Cedric Smith, and his deep roots in the culture of rural Southwestern Ontario, also home to the musicians of the infamous PCCdne (whose existence is still in dispute). PCCdne grew out of the cultural interactions of

people moving back-to-the-land in Perth County and those already established around the Stratford Shakespearean festival and the Black Swan coffee house—home to what its longtime proprietor calls an "anarcho-socio-politico-musical and creative madness."

The exact number of PCCdne has never been determined, but with Rumour Records they have produced five earlier recordings in various combinations and permutations, as well as performing around Canada.

Says PCCdne oldtimer Harry Finlay: "Rumour Records has attempted to bring the best creative work of really conscientious artists to a public generally poorly served." He notes that PCCdne's financial success has been in direct proportion to its willingness to deal with big record companies, like Columbia, and large-scale distributors, who would have nothing to do with a home-grown product like Rumour.

"We were never out to make money," says Finlay, "but the fact that distributors are happier selling 100,000 each of ten albums by 'international' acts, rather than 1,000 albums each by 1,000 Canadian artists was rudely brought home to us."

Working Class Nationalism

PCCdne and Rumour Records tried to promote a particular cultural ambience

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