

SURREALLY POLITICAL

by Arn Passman

It was my kind of surrealism. The sign on the Avenue, the afternoon of Nixon's resignation, just found space in my eye:

We've Done A Lot to America
And
We're Gonna Do More
Information Meeting about the
Revolutionary Student Brigade.

Hmmm, I mused, just the sort of thing to start the rumored new regime.

So, at 7:30, I came to Stiles Hall's front door, where a note enticingly read: Revolutionary Student Brigade meeting -- Go to the back door and up the stairs.

Intrigue awaits. But would I be able to get to Ho Chi Minh Park for any of the evening's festivities? Only time and fate would tell.

Up the stairs and down a hall. To a large room where youth were pushing back chairs to make more space for the meeting. It was needed; maybe 50 folks -- all at least ten years younger than me,

it looked -- showed up. There was an air of a round table-like summit that our distance apart produced.

Hank Reichman, a TA in his late 20's, opened the meeting. He identified himself as a member of the Revolutionary Student Brigade organizing committee of Berkeley. "We hope to introduce what we stand for and what we hope to do," he said. "We were hoping to show Nixon's Checker's speech tonight, but we'll start the entertainment with the May 4th Singers.

"But until they all arrive, Sharon, Yuki will give a history of the brigade, and then we'll open the floor to questions." Sharon barely got into the history before the May 4th Singers did all arrive. Like Sharon, they were Asian Americans, who were the largest single group at the meeting.

The May 4th Singers said their name came from a combination of a student-begun general strike in China in 1919, and the Cambodian invasion, Haiphong harbor mining, and Kent State murders of 1970 on that date. Their song, "It Isn't Nice," was nice enough.

Sharon got back into the history, but first she announced that the Revolutionary Student Brigade would be having a bake sale at the Shattuck Ave. Co-op Saturday, a fund-raising party that night in San Francisco, hustling at the Alameda Flea Market the following morning, and selling raffles for 50c, the winner to get three records from Leopold's. The winner will be announced at a fund-raising picnic to be held this Sunday at Lake Temescal, beginning at noon.

The Brigade's Becca Wakefield, after this weekend's activities, said, "We made about \$200, after expenses. And people were interested to hear what we had to say."

Sharon said the organization began in 1972 as the Attica Brigade. "It was formed as a mass, anti-imperialist, multi-national student organization and initially came together around the anti-war march that April, in support of the seven-point peace proposal. It developed as a student group unified around the two basic principles of:

"1) Support for national liberation struggles abroad as exempli-

fied by the NLF and PRG of South Vietnam and

"2) Support for the struggles of oppressed at home."

Sharon said the Attica Brigade started a newspaper, *Fight Back*, and began vocal and visible opposition to cutbacks in education, and support of African Liberation, farmworkers and the Farah Strikers, among other things. "In the last two years, chapters have been set up nationally," she said. "And we have grown from five chapters in New York City, to over sixty chapters in twenty states."

The Attica Brigade called a national convention this year, which was held in Iowa City, June 15-17. "Over 450 people from 83 campuses attended," said Sharon. "Including forty-five from the Bay Area, twenty-five from Berkeley."

After Sharon spoke, Hank opened the floor to questions. A striking A.C. bus driver, who said he had seven years in the movement, wanted to know if anti-imperialism meant aligning with Mao-Tse Tung "who toasted the death of the Vietnamese struggle with the great killer from America."

Two members of the Spartacist League got into additional contradictions, during the course of which Hank freely admitted he was a member of Revolutionary Union, a Communist organization.

Ultimately, the Spartacists were beaten down on their interradical complaints and questions, many of which had to do with their differences with the Revolutionary Union. They said RU takes a very active role in the direction of the Revolutionary Student Brigade.

Hank denied this whenever it came up, further emphasizing that this was just an informational meeting, not a debate. Other brigade members said the RU was helping it to build. At the end of the meeting, Spartacists who signed an address sheet were crossed off.

The evening took a surreal leap. Sounds of people celebrating in the street below, clamored for our involvement. I looked out a window, but couldn't see anything through the foliage. I returned to my seat, telling myself that getting in on the ground floor of young activist-theoreticians wasn't all that counter-revolutionary.

Sharon went on to say that actions in California were going to center around the Chicano moratorium. "This includes support of the farmworkers, freedom for Puerto Rico, cleaning up of drug traffic, and deportation," she said.

She continued that Bay Area activities were going to include justice for Tyrone Guyton, support for Ruchell Magee and the Rucker and Leema electronics workers, opposition to police repression and to the closing of the Cal Criminology and Ethnic Studies schools.

Sharon also said that the RSB were the people who took over the Statue of Liberty for a couple of hours, earlier this year. "It didn't get much publicity, but it was us," she said.

The meeting closed after two hours with the information that the Revolutionary Student Brigade meets every Saturday at 10 am. in the Asian Studies Library, which is 142 Dwinelle Hall. For further information, call 653-0549.

Oh yes, one last surreal thing about the local meeting. They were selling a 45 rpm record by a duo called "Prairie Fire." I didn't hear it, but the songs are "Out of Gas" and "We've Been Feeding You For A Thousand Years," and sells for a buck-and-a-half.

I didn't feel like buying it, but it struck me as a nicely McLuhanistic touch. Maybe more to say in six minutes of song than in 150 pages of admittedly free rhetoric.

The RSB didn't strike me as particularly revolutionary. I didn't get near the hit I got from SDS meetings I attended here in early '65. More humanistic, if anything.

But with a far greater base than their forerunners in the '60's, and out of the quiescence of the early '70's, the RSB struck me as being the new pragmatic student left. I never got into the streets that resignation night, and I don't know if they ever did

UN Votes To Control Mammoth Companies

The activities of large multinational corporations -- whose holdings span the world -- will now be policed by the United Nations.

The 54-nation United Nations Economic and Social Council voted unanimously this week to adopt stringent international laws to govern multinational companies.

The corporations, according to the U.N., will be known as "transnational companies" -- and they will be required to abide by certain legally-binding international agreements. The U.N., said it will enforce anti-trust actions, and will monitor the pricing and taxation policies of all transnational companies.

The U.N., completed a study last June which concluded that transnational companies -- such as I.T.T. and Exxon -- have grown so large that no nation on earth can effectively control them.-- (ZNS)



Agonies Of A Closet Eater

Last December, during the drizzly, holiday season, Sybil Schwartz got stuck in her North Berkeley studio apartment. Her lover, Carl, who'd kept her happy and skinny during the summer and fall, returned to his laboratory when winter arrived. He chose DNA molecules over the thrills of lovemaking and frolics in Tilden Park.

Sybil didn't have anyone to celebrate with, so she hid out on Hearst Street, and used cable t.v. and Euclid Donuts as tools for oblivion. Meanwhile, the "lucky ones" basted turkeys, roasted chesnuts, kissed and hugged, and massaged each other, wrapped gifts and sipped hot toddies. No one mentioned loneliness; everyone was too busy discussing potluck parties, fruitcakes full of weed, and who was currently laying who.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Sybil ate several dozen donuts, among other things, grew plump, and felt dead as a holiday turkey, literally stuffed all the time, yet forever hungry. Butchered by her lover, defeated by the weather, she began imagining a pistol aimed at her temples. Sometimes, she varied the image, concocting a large, U-Haul truck running her over at Shattuck and University during rush hour, so everyone could see.

In her less dramatic moments, she envisioned heart attacks, pneumonia, V.D., shingles and food poisoning. Sybil longed for the '60's, when at least she could have thrown herself into political work; but now, in the winter of '73, it wasn't so easy, with 25 extra pounds, to get into body work and sexual liberation. Even had she wanted to, who would have wanted her?

"Not even I would," thought Sybil, eyeing her fattened-up flesh in the mirror.

After the holidays, Sybil decided to try once more to be a meaningful person. She called Myra Horowitz, a long-time friend from college and inquired if Myra would like to join her for Chinese food at the Yangtze River restaurant.

Myra declined because of the hectic holidays, which had wiped her out. She had loads to catch up on -- finishing her sociology doctoral thesis, repainting the house and giving batik lessons. "But thanks, anyway, Sybil."

Sybil understood. Much later that night at 3 in the morning to be exact, she drove to a 7-eleven store on Solano Avenue and bought a gallon of plain old vanilla ice cream, because that was all they had left. She fell asleep to Berg-

man and Bogart saying goodbye to each other on the late show.

In the morning, Sybil awoke to a screen full of buzzing, little dots and an empty gallon of ice cream stuck to the bedspread. She ignored them, and went directly to the bathroom scale, noting she had gained 2 pounds. She reached for her toothbrush, and decided against using it. Might as well let her teeth rot. She didn't wash her face either. Spying her dying plants, she knew she would not water them. "I'll fix them!" she snarled.

She had fantasies about Virginia Bakery. How she would love a bearclaw to give her sluggish body a little lift! But then she recalled her New Year's resolution: "You will go on a diet and get very thin and feel very fine and get into a whole new scene."

While Sybil was thinking these determined thoughts, she put her army coat over her tiger pajamas and drove to Euclid Avenue where she bought one of each kind of donut. Moving furtively thru the doorway, passed fun-loving couples sharing malts, her heart beat wildly in her belly. Thank god, she didn't run into anyone she knew, or used to know. Her friends wouldn't be caught dead in a dump like this! They went to Virginia Bakery. A few drops of liquid ran down her cheeks; Sybil didn't notice them, nor did she remove the excess jelly, sugar and cinnamon stuck to her face.

She stayed in bed all day watching soap operas, wondering, when she would have the courage to fight back with good intentions of cottage cheese and grapefruit? "Today is the first day of the rest of your life," she thought, a phrase people used when they wanted to start all over again.

So, Sybil drove to the Coop market, and bought two pounds of low-fat cottage cheese and a dozen grapefruits. Crawling into bed with her new diet and a double feature, she ate all the cottage cheese and eight grapefruits, as if the more diet food she ate, the more quickly she'd get skinny. The next day, she weighted exactly the same amount.

"Well, at least I didn't gain," she whimpered, and went to Lucky's for variety, and bought a smaller container of cottage cheese, because she knew she'd eat it all. She still had four grapefruits. She even did ten sit-ups before turning on the t.v.; things were looking up.

A week passed and Sybil lost seven pounds. "Right on schedule," she said, as she weighed in, brushed her teeth, and washed her face with organic avocado

soap. She was now doing calisthenics with the Canadian Air Force, literally knocking herself out at night with jumping jacks.

In between thoughts of pistols and donuts, U-Haul trucks and donuts, nothingness and donuts, Sybil smiled occasionally. She called another friend, Rhoda and asked, "Hey want to go see a movie?" Rhoda's old man, Mel, was in from Santa Cruz and they needed a quiet weekend alone. "Otherwise, I'd love to, Sybil!"

"Far-out, Rhoda, Hey, say hello to Mel for me," said Sybil.

"That bastard Mel always shows up at the most ridiculous times!" muttered Sybil as she drove to Euclid and bought four lemon, four jelly and four chocolate-covered donuts. Simultaneously chewing and crying, Sybil discovered a pattern: "I'm eating these shitty donuts because all my crummy friends spend their time with boyfriends and PhD's instead of me! Jesus, I hate them!... I hate myself!" she wailed and ran into the bathroom where she threw up repeatedly.

Back in the kitchen, Sybil threw the few remaining donuts in the trash. Nervously pacing the bedroom floor, she asked the existential question, "So now what? After three or four trips around her little world, she came up with an existential answer, "So now nothing."

Even after this miserable bout with involuntary peristalsis, Sybil managed to regain an appetite. Removing the rumpled bag of donuts from the garbage can, she knew she could have drowned them under a hot shower in the kitchen sink; but no, unconsciously she had saved the donuts.

Next day, she had gained a pound. "What's a lousy pound?" she asked. "Gee, I can eat a lot and not gain much at all." But she couldn't fool herself. "A lousy pound is everything."

"I can't diet; I can't do anything right!" Flailing her arms and kicking her legs, Sybil became aware that it was not her 'cool, Berkeley adult,' but her 10-year old, New York City child that was screaming: "Nobody loves me!"

So Sybil phoned Nancy, who was in transactional analysis, and admitted she was a closet-eater; she had tried self-control but apparently didn't have any. Nancy was more receptive than Rhoda or Myra. "Listen, Sybil! Abbey, my shrink is good!" and she gave Sybil the phone number of the answering service, before rushing off to her bio-energetics class.

Sybil had 60 seconds to tell the taperecorder what was troubling her. "Hi... I'm a friend of Nancy's

and I haven't been feeling very well lately. I mean I'd like to make an appointment, if you could call back, I'd really... Oh shit!" she concluded, and hung up. "All shrinks are alike; they're only in it for the money!" Sybil Schwartz resigned herself to living as a hermit.

The next day, Nancy phoned to see how things had worked out. Sybil explained she had become flustered talking to a machine. Then she began to cry. A well of emotion, clogged for months with donuts and t.v., opened up and sent sobs from her belly to her mouth and out into the air.

"Hey listen, Syb." said Nancy, "I'll talk to Abbey and call you back, O.K.?"

"Gee, swell, Nanc. Thanks." Sybil danced around the room, singing, "Somebody out there loves me! somebody is going to help save my life." And she decided that no matter what, she wasn't going to eat "shit food" today!

Nancy phoned and said Abbey was booked up but knew someone terrific and she gave Sybil the number.

"Hey, Nancy. Why not come over tonight, and we could... well, talk or something." suggested Sybil.

"I'd love it," said Nancy, "but tonight's my women's group. Hey why not come along? Sounds like it would be good if you got out a little more."

Sybil got up the nerve to go, and when she arrived she saw that some of the women were thin, some fat, and some in-between. All were suffering. Sybil felt immediately comfortably, thinking, "I'm not alone. Lots of people have closet problems."

Twelve women got close that night, sharing problems and celebrating cohesiveness by going to Giovanni's for pizza and beer, and then returning to their separate closets.

Sybil felt dissatisfied, because she was still alone, fat and had eaten junk food again. She wondered, what was it really that was missing in Sybil Schwartz's life? Then, she thought, maybe it wasn't healthy to try to find answers to such big questions all the time. Maybe she should just pay attention to her feelings, which she had been told at the Women's group meeting would help.

Stuck in her studio in the middle of frozen February, Sybil felt rotten! And, besides spring was still a long way off. She had plenty of time to lose weight and get into her sexy, two-piece bathing suit. "So what's another few donuts, now when I really need them?"

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