

THE RISE AND RISE OF MICHAEL RIMMER
DIRECTED BY KEVIN BILLINGTON
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DAVID FROST
SHOWING AT THE WARNER-RENDEZVOUS

Negations

MEDIA MANIPULATION has been the source of a nagging anxiety among liberal circles for some time.

The power of the image, the sales distortion, the dream merchants, the opinion polls, the hidden persuasion, are important and powerful weapons in the arsenal of the bourgeoisie.

But for the liberal they remain a trouble to his conscience, as he stands on the sidelines, the guilty lap dog of the ruling class.

The post-war boom gave rise to the growth of a media industry; the number of ad men grew, TV expanded, consumption seemed endless and confirmed the omnipotence of the manipulators.

Impressionistic

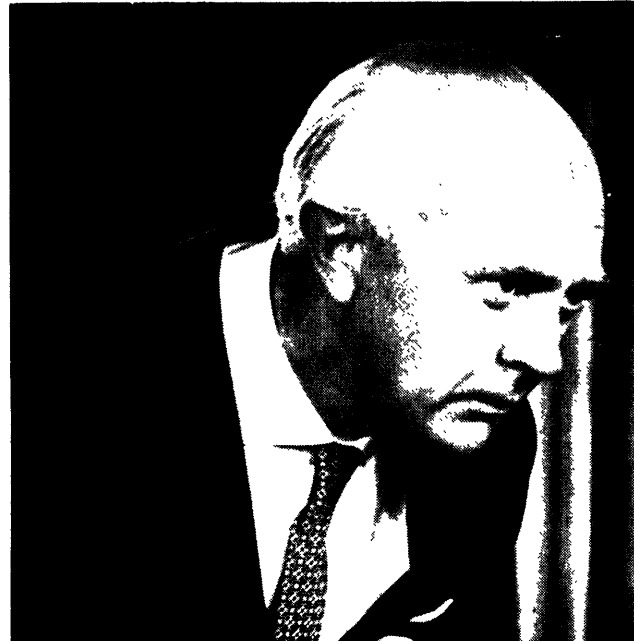
The liberals warned of the cheapening values, while the bourgeoisie were supposed to have bought off the working class with cars, refrigerators and TV sets.

The politics of the boom were also reflected in the workers' movement; revisionists declared that the proletariat could not be considered a revolutionary class. Instead impressionistic theories of the revolutionary role of the students had a vogue.

Equally it was pointed out that in the Soviet Union similar manipulative techniques predominated. The wise ones shook their heads and said that all Soviet workers wanted was the same as their counterparts in the West: cars, comfort and carpets, the implication being, how dare they?

History has a way, however, of turning such assumptions on their heads, into their opposites.

The boom has become transformed into the biggest crisis that international capitalism has faced. The 'liberalized' Soviet bureaucracy rolled tanks into



Above and below: RONALD FRASER as Tom Hutchinson. Left: GEORGE A. COOPER as the Bishop of Cowley.

Czechoslovakia. Events in May-June, 1968 in France exposed international Stalinism as a major counter-revolutionary force.

The chickens come home to roost in no uncertain way, and of course liberals, and social democrats, Stalinists and revisionists are prostrated by the change.

Blind

What unites these groups with media men is a shared idealist vision of the world which views society as a set of fixed strings on which the unscrupulous can play.

They are blind to contradiction, to the struggle of opposites which is the source of all movement and change. They substitute appearance for the historic primacy of the class struggle.

The period we are now in is the negation of the boom. All the characteristics of the earlier period are transformed into their opposites.

The ad man's dream world has become his nightmare. The consumer goods which once held back the working class now, by their shortage, drive them forward in a revolutionary way. The boom that promised a consumers' paradise now threatens the basic rights of workers. The period of class truce is now a declaration of class war.

The liberal who has been snuffing his righteous way through the boom is faced with a new reality, and barks his warning at his pay master. There is nothing like class struggle to expose the reactionary assumptions of these hirelings.

It is for this reason that the film 'The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer' is worth a visit.

It's about the power of the media and is made by prominent media men. It's producer is none other than David Frost. The owner of Paradine Productions who financed the piece.

Frost's other business interests also feature in the film in the shape of London Weekend Television of which he is a major shareholder.

The main star is Peter Cook, a well-known satirist, who also wrote the script, and the director, Kevin Billington.

The story concerns one Michael Rimmer who appears one day in the decrepit offices of a failing advertising agency. Within a short time he has transformed it into a powerhouse of success.

A sex survey conducted by the agency puts them on the front page of every major newspaper and television screen. By rigging the samples of a rival opinion poll, he discredits the other firm.

(This sequence is actually very funny. They send a squad of people to be interviewed on their religious habits and the survey reveals from the sampling

that the majority of one small town are Buddhists.)

Rimmer then turns his attention to politics and conducts a campaign for the Tory leader, discrediting the Labour Prime Minister, by persuading him to over expose himself on television.

Rimmer finally enters politics himself, becomes the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer and eliminates the Prime Minister by pushing him off an oil rig.

He is now the first minister of the land and institutes a system of ballot government where the entire electorate are asked

their opinion on every matter of policy. In time everyone is so bored with filling in forms that they vote him the first dictator of the land in order to stop being bothered.

What characterizes the film is its cynicism and contempt of the working class. However much it might protest that this satire is a warning against a possible future (the film was in fact made before the election and was intended to be a prediction for the future, God help us) it only reaffirms the cynical assumptions that it is supposedly criticizing.

It is the product, ultimately, of an arrogant elitist way of thinking. It considers workers as morons and imbeciles, dupes of any who care to manipulate them and pander to their backwardness. It also assumes that all workers are racists.

'Vulgar' forces

This, of course, is the underlying class position of the liberal, feeling the pressure, even inside the walls of his Hampstead salon.

Their orderly good taste and ironic wit is being challenged by 'vulgar' forces... but we can do without their contemptuous laments.

Nothing can remain fixed. At a time of big revolutionary struggle the liberal cannot remain on the sidelines nor vanish through a hole in history. He must either identify with his masters or turn to the working class.

'The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer' shows only too clearly the transmission from idealism to extreme reaction, for they are opposites of the same coin.

That was the Week That Was... was the satire of the boom. In the revolutionary 1970s it's the cry of middle-class crisis and reaction.

'The ad-man's dream-world becomes his nightmare...'- A BRIAN MOORE REVIEW



RICHARD PEARSON is Steven Hench.



PETER COOK plays Michael Rimmer.



IMPORTANT READING

Research by Trotsky during discussion May 3 1924 at a meeting called by the Marx Development of the Central Committee of the CPGB on Party Policy in the Field of Imperialist Literature.

Class & Art

PROBLEMS OF CULTURE UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

Leon Trotsky

Price 2s 6d post inc.

THEATRE 'EXILES'

'I CANNOT tell you how strange I feel sometimes in my attempt to lead a more civilized life than my contemporaries,' wrote James Joyce in a letter to his brother Stanislaus in 1905.

'Why should I have brought Nora—his common-law wife—to a priest or a lawyer to make her swear away her life for me?

'And why should I superimpose on my child the very troublesome burden of belief which my father and mother superimposed upon me?'

Harold Pinter's direction of Joyce's only stage play 'EXILES', at London's Mermaid Theatre, captures some of this strangeness; this unquiet effort.

Completed ten years after his letter to Stanislaus (Joyce was in the process of finishing it in Trieste when Italy entered the war in May 1915), the play centres around the return of a writer—Richard Rowan—and his family to Dublin after a period of voluntary exile.

Prism

The only attraction of Richard's common-law wife Bertha for his friend Robert Hand, a journalist, is revived—and what ensues forms the substance of the plot.

While this refracts through a dramatic prism certain incidents in Joyce's own experience, the play takes very critical look at the problems of breaking—in a purely rationalistic manner—from the rigid—Irish Catholic morality of the period. Richard attempts to complete

this break—his 'exile', though returned home—through a tortuous struggle for Bertha's freedom either to accept and return Robert's attentions or not.

Robert proposes 'a battle of both our souls, different as they are, against all that is false in them and in the world. The battle of your soul against the spectre of fidelity, of mine against the spectre of friendship.

'All life', he says, 'is a conquest, the victory of human passion over the commandments of cowardice.'

Contest

But this, Richard replies, 'is the language of my youth.'

What Robert proposes is a contest. 'Shall we? Freely? Together?' he urges.

'Together' no, Richard

JAMES JOYCE



Power and waste

IF BRITAIN'S 115,000 electricity supply workers decide to strike, the capitalist press, the Tory government and the Central Electricity Generating Board will almost certainly hurt at them all the usual abuse about waste of resources and losses.

Only those who see through these intimidating tactics will raise their eyebrows at the sight of the CEGB bemoaning waste and losses.

They will remember that last year the Board's profits were £64.5 million, achieved on the basis of slashing hours, sacking workers—20,000 in the last two years—and forcing up productivity by 40 per cent.

True the strike will cause suffering.

★

The private contractors who do so well out of the industry's profits will face a lean time, the Tories may be a little short of cash to keep the old family businesses going and the state firm chiefs may have to wait a little before they can have another £50-a-week pay increase. Some of these will consider the Board's 35s offer in the least derisory compared to the £5 being demanded by the union and the £10 being sought by the men.

Without doubt Aims of Industry—financed by private enterprise big business—will be among those with pity for the 'sufferers' and none for the ungrateful strikers.

Last week they were eager to prove that the CEGB wastes two-thirds of the energy produced in power stations through dissipating it in river and sea water—enough to provide heat for 50 million people a year. The

behind THE NEWS

supply workers comes, the CEGB should ask itself who is responsible for waste. It should also ask what can be done about it. But they will not dare to come up with an answer. Aims of Industry and the CEGB know that such waste will not be eliminated except in a socialist economy where industry has been brought under workers' control and where profit no longer decides how resources are used.

When the witch-hunt of the CEGB does not disagree.

But neither do they point out that the cost of saving this heat through complicated and expensive engineering works would not make it worth their while. What this means is that if profit were not the sole criterion for action, 50 million people would benefit.

When the witch-hunt of the CEGB does not disagree.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

£13 for 12 months (312 issues)
£6 10s for six months (156 issues)
£3 5s for three months (78 issues)

If you want to take Workers Press twice a week the rates are:
£1 for three months (24 issues)
£4 for 12 months (96 issues)

Fill in the form below NOW and send to:
Circulation Dept., Workers Press, 186a Clapham High St., London, SW4.

I would like to take out a subscription to Workers Press.

Days required MONDAY THURSDAY
(Please tick) TUESDAY FRIDAY
WEDNESDAY SATURDAY

Or
Full subscription (six days) for months.

Name

Address

Amount enclosed £ s d

NEW PARK PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

L. TROTSKY: GERMANY 1931/32 paperback 25s 0d
cloth 37s 6d

WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING? 7s 6d

HISTORY OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 3 vols 30s 0d

AGE OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION 9s 0d

REVOLUTION BETRAYED paperback 12s 6d
cloth 21s 0d

PROBLEMS OF CHINESE REVOLUTION paperback 22s 6d
cloth 37s 6d

PERMANENT REVOLUTION, RESULTS & PROSPECTS 25s 0d

R. BLACK: STALINISM IN BRITAIN paperback 22s 6d
cloth 40s 0d

PAMPHLETS

L. TROTSKY: DEATH AGONY OF CAPITALISM (The Transitional Programme) 1s 0d

CLASS NATURE OF THE SOVIET STATE 4s 0d

CLASS AND ART 2s 0d

YOUNG PEOPLE STUDY POLITICS 1s 9d

MARXISM AND TRADE UNIONS 3s 6d

Please tick those books required

NAME

ADDRESS

Amount enclosed £ s d plus 6d postage for each pamphlet 1s 6d postage for each book.

Complete form and send with money to
New Park Publications, 186a Clapham High St, London, SW4.

