

a modest proposal for how

the BAD OLD DAYS WILL END



THE COLLAPSE OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT HAS ALREADY BEGUN. EVERYONE KNOWS THIS. EVERYONE FEELS IT IN THEIR BONES. ALL THE ATTEMPTS TO DENY IT ARE ENOUGH TO PROVE IT.

It's as though everyone's waiting for something but no one knows what. Whether I find myself wandering around in the city or in the graveyard-like suburbs, this feeling of despair seems to haunt everyone even in their sleep.

Meanwhile we just grow more isolated from each other. When I meet someone on the street we really have nothing to say to each other because nothing has really happened. So empty words are exchanged and we stumble away awkwardly. Nobody seems to enjoy anything anymore. Nobody seems to know why they're alive. What everybody does know, however, is that this society is falling apart, and that all the attempts to hold it together just make it more hideous.

As far back as I can remember everyone around me spent most of their lives sacrificing in order to survive. There was, of course, always a certain degree of marginal freedom—but now even this is vanishing. And

as politicians talk about the need for yet more sacrifice, the mass media pumps out more ways to glorify misery.

It's not as though things used to be great or anything. But perhaps never before have so many people had the feeling that everything has become so pointless—that each day is like the last, only a little more dull, a little more empty, a little more exhausting.

Surely there lurks inside each of us a subjective passion such as maybe we experienced in childhood but have been too embarrassed to think about for years—the desire to be in love always—the kind of inspiration which once unleashed could move mountains and remake the world. Currently our energy is being constantly used up just to keep things the same. Artists have nothing left to express but their emptiness, and the emptiness of a society which can no longer find any reason to exist. All joy has gone out of music. All the new processing and quasi-technical perfection cannot compensate for the total absence of inspiration. And whatever remedies are adopted are usually worse than the disease. Jobs are becoming so meaningless and so exhausting that many people would prefer to be unemployed. "Leisure time" is becoming as bor-



ing as work. All the "problem solving" of the sociologists, economists, psychologists and urban planners just become ways to make more acceptable the humiliation we experience every day.

Nonetheless, I know this misery will go on only so long as we allow it to.

The spectacle is like a supermarket of false alternatives. In spite of the supposed "opposition" between capitalism and "Communism," the difference between them is like the difference between Pepsi Cola and Seven Up. "Communism"—as it exists in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, etc.—is just a state-monopolized form of capitalism. But whether you live under private corporate capitalism or bureaucratic state-capitalism, it's essentially the same old crap. *Everywhere* people sell their lives in order to survive. Every-

where daily life has been reduced to a mere series of humiliations. Even during "free time" there isn't any freedom. Our whole environment has been produced in an alien form.

And now, as world capitalism is falling apart, its spokesmen tell us that it's our fault for being too "greedy," too "selfish," too "affluent."

But there is nothing mysterious about the present breakdown of social production. It is nothing other than the outcome of the contradiction between the forces of production* and the social relations of production. Now capitalism has become

*By "forces of production" I mean everything which serves to enhance our ability to reproduce ourselves and to enrich ourselves as human beings. This includes not only improvements in "technology," but also in organizational methods and our own skills, energy, creativity and imagination—as well as our ability to realize these.

