

Walter Huntley's
Saturday
SOUND-OFF



The horror awaiting islanders

EASTER in Buenos Aires. In the fashionable Calle Florida the shopping crowds will be out looking chic and affluent despite the growing war clouds.

Away from the elegant city centre, however, the story is different; in the back streets and out in the country, there is another Argentina; the nation that lives in oppression and poverty.

Just five years ago this month, I interviewed the then President, General Jorge Videla, in his palace to which he commuted only by helicopter from his fortified home as a matter of elementary security. He seemed a reasonable, cultured man who several times asserted his dedication to a return to democratic, constitutional rule. Five years later that is still to come.

He had outlawed strikes. He had "intervened" many of the unions — a euphemism which meant their leaders had been replaced by more amenable men — and he had put thousands into camps and prisons. Thousands more had just disappeared.

It had all been necessary to preserve the State, I was told.

How many political prisoners were there in Argentina? I asked the general when I finally got to see him after a careful screening.

None, said the general through an interpreter. All those who had been necessarily imprisoned were terrorists and subversives.

Marxists? I asked.

The general looked a little irritated. He repeated, slowly and deliberately, that the internal security of Argentina was not a political matter. Stabbing his finger in the air, he said again that what he was dealing with was terrorism and subversion.

It is a very successful technique. If you deny people the right to a political view then you cannot be accused of acting against political opposition.

Life is cheap

By all accounts, the urbane but nonetheless ruthless General Videla was almost a benign father figure compared with today's military dictator, General Galtieri, the man who now holds the fate of the British in the Falkland Islands — the Malvinas to the Argentinians — literally in his hands.

For life is cheap under a totalitarian regime.

Imprisonment for activities against the State



SO the lads now have their own TV programme on How to Pick up Girls. And you don't ask the girl in the disco. "Do you come here often?" You say. "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" So she has to reply in detail. I know the answer you'd have got in my day if you'd asked that question — "Whar yer on about?"

and that can have a wide application — invariably means torture. I heard of several instances while I was there including a young girl who was picked up as a suspect, stripped and given the electrode torture. She was, in fact, completely innocent and managed finally to convince her captors that she could tell them nothing because she knew nothing.

She was one of the lucky ones. The torturers can get carried away and finish up with a corpse.

This is what the Argentinian military rulers do to their own people. Do you think they're likely to give up their regard for the British citizens of the Falklands, foreigners who have stood in the way of their ambitions for nearly 150 years?



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Enough's enough now, Bugsy

CONGRATULATIONS to Granada TV children's programmes chief, Steve Leahy, for deciding not to screen some Bugs Bunny cartoon films because they are too violent.

"We accept there is a lot of violence in cartoons," he says. "But most is so outrageous as to be quite safe. What worried us was the sort of violence where the moral good over evil wasn't clear, or the kind children might imitate."

I know just what you mean, Mr. Leahy. The sort of violence children can see on so-called adult TV any night of the week.

Sheer grit, Geraldine



FOR sheer pluck and perseverance — apart from being very attractive as well — Geraldine Rees, first woman to complete the gruelling Grand National course.

How many people, I wonder, realise that an hour later she was in the saddle again riding in the Lucky Jim Hurdle which didn't prove so lucky — she fell at the first obstacle and landed on her head. To which her comment was: "Racing's a great leveler."

Wise young Prince ...



HOW sensible of Prince Edward. Tracked down by a Press photographer to a secret hideaway in the Austrian Tyrol where he goes ski-ing, he didn't fulminate and shout: "Be off!" (or something similar). He simply said: "Look, I'll pose for the pictures. You're going to take them anyway, and I'd rather I looked my best. But promise not to say exactly where they were taken."

The pictures were taken, the secret kept. It's what is known as good PR.

THE Crown Agents, who supply postage stamps to the Falkland Islands, have been flooded with orders for the current issue by collectors who fear it might be the last.

A case of acting post haste.

Scouse talk ...

Oh, dear, I've really been taken to task by Mrs. Margaret Dunn, mother of Social Democrat MP Mr. James Dunn, for not knowing the answers to last week's Scouseisms — "Act soft and fill yer a coal yard" and "I sudden kick an ollie down a brew."

Mrs. Dunn, widow of Jimmy Dunn, a former Daily Post & Echo employee, says the coal yard was originally from the days when boys used to go round with makeshift carts selling coal which was stored in their own backyards. They were often of low quality — hence the expression.

The second refers to the popular street game of ollies, or marbles, and the brew is the hill in Brunswick Road, of which people there were much more conscious since they walked a great deal more than we do now.

Thank you, Margaret. Nice to have chatted with you.

After India Fingers just won't seem the same ...



ROCK FILE
by Peter Trollope

During its existence the low slung roof above the stage at Eric's literally claimed many scalps.

You could almost judge a gig by the quality and quantity of bumps in the roof. In retrospect there was a pedigree of dents in that ceiling, cause- celebre of cerebral damage.

There was the mighty Clash and Joe Strummer's almost comical indentation ... "Lon-don calling ... SMACK!" And then the time when Iggy Pop soared like a salmon — for many it would have been a terminal "THUD" — but Iggy, well Iggy kept on singing. It was a hollow victory.

Looking back though there was none so fine, or foine if you look, as the occasion when Johnnie Fingers took off like the Shuttle. Next stop the stars, but Eric's roof held good and true, and Johnnie Fingers' "Well of ended up seeing stars all right. My head hurt for weeks."

Fingers survived such "skulduggery". So did the Boomtown Rats. The gig is still etched in many minds as one of the best seen at Eric's.

On road for nine months

"I couldn't forget it," says Fingers. "I still think I've got a lump on my head. "Know Eric's was a grand place." The Rats keyboard player pauses for a moment's silent homage to the memory of the club and ceiling.

Many ceilings have passed over Fingers head since those days. "I do like travelling, especially as we make it our policy these days to play some really exotic places." His soft Irish accent makes "exotic" a long, drawn out enterprise.

Does he like Mondays? "Yes, it means the start of another week, maybe another country. Sometimes ... well sometimes I don't like getting up out of bed."

This is to those who know Fingers, will be obvious. The man has made "JAMIES" famous. "Ah yes the pyjamas. I dunno why I started wearing them. It just seemed to happen."

"No it wasn't a gimmick. I

RATS ARE HEADING THIS WAY

wore them all the time. Have you ever stopped to consider how comfy they can be?"

"I mean it. Take it from me, there's nothing nicer than py-jamas, especially when you are in a hot country, although I must confess, I haven't been wearing them all the time lately." He laughs. "More a sort of Irish variation on the theme ... look ... the trousers one day, the tops the next."

"The tops" he quickly adds, are worn with trousers. Mr. Fingers is not about to reveal his credentials to an expectant world just yet.

"Gawd no ... although y'know it's something to think about." Mr. Fingers is adamant that this practice does however happen in far off lands in South East Asia.

Boys, it seems will be boys over there. "There is—ahem—a certain amount of exposure shown by some of them. Perhaps they get a little too excited ..."

In India the fans get more than excited. "India, well, it's kind of a wild place really. Look we were the first rock band to be there. Y'know, we would walk out

onstage and all you could see for miles look was turbans."

But, and it's as big a "but" as you can get, although these trips to foreign climes like conquistador Caruso's may sound fun, isn't there a danger they have been away too long. Isn't there a danger that the fans may forget, or may feel forgotten?"

"Sure I do agree," says Fingers. "We know we've probably been away too long from Britain but there was nothing else we could do. It wasn't look deliberate, we aren't ignoring anyone here, but we've been trying to break new ground and if a band is to have any life then you've always got to progress and meet new challenges."

"In a way now we've got a new challenge back here in Britain because we've been away for so long. We now have to work harder here to make people aware of the Boomtown Rats again."

"But at the same time I think that the most amazing thing for us has been the way that the tickets have sold out for the tour. That's the true test of your popularity."

● Winners of the Visage album are Tony Hennessy, Halewood Road, Woolton, Liverpool 25; Colin Wong, Westminster Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool 4; Anne Barr, Devonshire Road, Torxteth, Liverpool; Terry Lawson, Brook Cottage, Liverpool Road, Prescot, and Miss L. Silcock, Harewell Road, Norris Green, Liverpool 11.

"If there hadn't been a good response from people wanting to see us, well then I think the writing might have been on the wall look."

But isn't it true that The Rats' recent singles haven't done quite as well as expected?

Other things in life ...

"Well you learn to get a little philosophical about it all. I think that the tour will bring us back. I think it will certainly help the album along."

"You see we're not too worried about dominating the charts all the time. Obviously it would be nice, but there are other things."

One of the "other things" is the new album Five Deep. "We did it with Tony Visconti."

Visconti must have a thing about vermin. Recently he was working with Afrand Of Mice and now The Boomtown Rats.

"Actually we really do like working with him. We did Mondo Bongo together and now this one."

Obviously when we're on the tour (which takes in a date at Liverpool's Empire Theatre on April 22) we will be doing most of Five Deep. There'll be a few old ones of course, but we've also got a few surprises look ... tucked up our sleeve."

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