

The Right on Sex and the Left

One of the Moon-backed *Washington Times's* subsidiary publications is a thick monthly called *The World and I*, edited by Morton A. Kaplan and charging \$90 for a subscription. Its first issue this January had a piece by Albert Michaels titled "The Media, the Adversary Culture, and U.S. Foreign Policy," which addressed itself to the question of why "the adversary culture" supports "Third World Governments and liberation movements." Michaels detected two reasons:

The first is political . . . they hope that these non-white people will disrupt Western society and international economy. . . . The second is more complex and has its origins in the widespread sexual obsession of Western society . . . a deep concern over personal sexual virility, especially among male radicals of Jewish background. This in turn, has led to a cult of imagined virility of Black revolutionaries and Third World leaders.

Michaels is a professor of history at the State University of New York at Buffalo. I called him to discuss which radicals of Jewish background he had in mind. At first he was not at home, though his recorded message did have a certain obsessive quality of its own. "Why don't you," murmured the professor's voice, "take that wonderful phone of yours and do something interesting with it."

When I finally talked to Michaels he was most amiable, saying his paper had been written for a 1984 meeting of the Moon-backed World Media Conference in Tokyo, which he'd not attended. He confessed that his notion of the psychosexual basis of U.S. radicalism was taken from an essay by Stanley Rothman and Robert Lichter called "Jews, Christians and the New Left," published a few years ago. (Rothman and Lichter are notorious for their tendentious studies, endlessly quoted by the right, advancing the preposterous thesis that the media elite is a bunch of McGovernite foes of big business.) "Their work reinforced a lot of what I observed myself in the 1960s, when I knew many people in S.D.S.," said Michaels, adding that he is Jewish himself and, though of basically neocon convictions, had been a good friend of Orlando Letelier. He agreed with me that penis envy on the part of Jewish male radicals was probably not a particularly helpful concept in analyzing the "adversary culture," saying that he was bored with writing about his specialty, Latin America, and was eager to push ahead with his history of art in Western New York. He expressed a keen admiration for my work, and we parted on warm terms. It never pays to call up people when one plans to trash them.