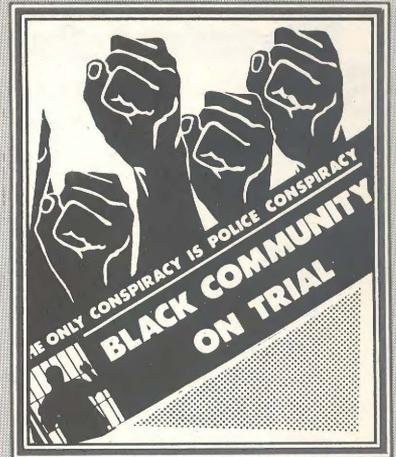


CLASS STRUGGLE

VOL. 14, NO. 7 SEPTEMBER 1990



DEWSBURY 82

CAMPAIGN WITH
BLACK WOMEN

INSIDE:

GERMANY

still divided

**North Sea
safety
offshore**



**TROOPS
OUT
NOW!**

**Iraqi Troops out of Kuwait
Western Troops out of the Gulf**

CLASS STRUGGLE

The overwhelming support in the United Nations for sanctions against Iraq because of its invasion of Kuwait reflected the basic principle of self-determination. No country has the right to invade another. The question of the nature of the government of that country is a matter for the people themselves to decide without outside interference.

Many people have pointed to the hypocrisy of the Western powers, particularly the USA and Britain who were quick to condemn Iraq but have generally supported Israel in the denial of self-determination to the Palestinian people and Iraq in its denial of self-determination to the Kurdish people, to give only two examples.

The Western powers are also hypocritical in their present condemnation of Iraq in that it is they who build up Saddam Hussein, supplied weapons to his army and were quick to make deals to reconstruct the Iraqi economy at the end of the Iraq-Iran war.

The Western rhetoric about self-determination, however, has faded. The justification for the US army's interference in the Middle East has become more and more openly one of defending western interests, in the sense of protecting the supply of cheap oil which fuels the economies of the West.

The Western powers, particularly Britain, bear a historic responsibility for the conflicts in the Middle East and can never provide solutions for these conflicts. Their armies should be withdrawn.

The Soviet Union, is torn by internal conflicts and although another superpower meeting has been arranged, it is clearly in too weak a position to challenge the US in the Middle East.

The changing balance of power between the two superpowers has created a new situation. Hence Margaret Thatcher is criticising other European powers for their lack of support for the US and calling for a changed role for NATO. Instead of NATO being justified as defensive, it is to take over the role of the US in some places, as imperialist policeman of the world.

This role reflects clearly the external aspect of the European Single Market. With the decline of the Soviet Union, and with the US facing massive economic problems, the European imperialist bloc will take on increasing importance.

POLITICAL PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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Making Waves in North Sea

Towards the end of August, the North Sea oil workers' struggle reached a crucial stage.

The militant struggle, begun in July on the second anniversary of the Piper Alpha explosion (which killed 167 workers), has remained solid. A series of one-day strikes and occupations has been met by one thousand sackings, lockouts and the use of the courts to end sit-ins.

The campaign, led by the unofficial (i.e. not organised or controlled by the trade unions) Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC), is for increased safety provision and the basic democratic right to join a trade union. Basic demands that deserve the support of all workers.

Offshore oil drilling is dangerous for workers and very profitable for the owners. Since drilling began in the 1960's, over £66 billion has been invested. Nearly 500 workers have been killed as the mad scramble for profit puts safety as a low priority. In the last two years, there have been 32 serious incidents offshore. The death rate in oil work is ten times that coal mining.

Organising the 30,000 workers in the oil fields is not easy. They are split up geographically and by the different shifts they work. Union membership is spread across seven different unions. Most are employed by a range of different contractors, behind whom are the powerful, transnational oil companies.

The early 1970's saw the beginnings of workers' resistance. The 1974 strike was broken by mass sackings. The trade union movement set up the Inter-Union Offshore Committee. Despite empty promises from the union leadership, little was achieved, particularly out on the rigs. Union membership remained low. The 1979 pay strike received little active support or leadership and the action crumbled. Union membership actually dropped in the 1980's.

NEW ORGANISATION

Failure by the unions led to the birth of the OILC, which led a series of strikes and occupations last year. Union pressure got the action called off. The contractors, under pressure from the oil companies, went back on their promise of a ballot on union recognition. Clearly, the issues raised by the struggles did not go away.



Ronnie McDonald, chairman of the joint trade union committee.

Defeat was temporary.

The recent action has put pressure on the employers and hit profits. North Sea oil is an important part of British imperialism's restructuring under Thatcher. Coinciding as it has with the "Gulf crisis" has been to the workers' advantage.

At the least it has forced the unions, at a time of declining membership, to take the workers' grievances seriously. However, the danger of a sell-out is real. Divisions within OILC have led to a suspension of action without real victory. A ballot on union recognition takes time and gives the companies a breathing space.

With the TUC and Labour Party conferences coming up, the unions will not want to rock the boat. They are divided over Tory anti-union legislation. There will be a lot of pressure on OILC to remain within the law whereas militants in the OILC are calling for secondary action (now illegal) and illegal occupations. All the unions give priority to the election of a Labour government rather than supporting action by workers. They find it only too convenient to forget that the oil rigs were not safe under Labour either.

DEFEND THE SACKED WORKERS

The workers who have been sacked in the recent action must be defended. We should not be misled by talk of looking at each individual case "on its own merits" or "taking cases through normal procedure". The workers were sacked because of their part in collective action and it needs collective action to win back their jobs. We must support the OILC demand for their reinstatement as part of any deal with the companies.

The danger is that the unions will get more members and there will be token efforts to improve safety but that many sacked workers will be out of a job.

It is not a question of pitting the OILC, a temporary body, to the official unions. We have to fight to make the unions represent the class interests of their members.

The issue is to win the dispute and to make the inter-union organisation and militancy of the OILC the model for how the trade unions should represent their members. This would be in the long-term interests, not only of the oil workers but of the whole of the working class. ■

N.H.S. - Not in a Healthy State

We print below extracts from an interview with a shop steward working in the NHS.

Class Struggle: What do you think about the current situation in the health service?

NHS Steward: In my view, things are steadily getting worse. Wards are being closed, existing services are overstretched, equipment does not get replaced and building repairs are put off. Kenneth Clarke's recent reforms will only make things worse. Generally speaking, staff morale is low. Essentially the main problem is the lack of funds.

CS: What changes will Clarke's reforms bring in?

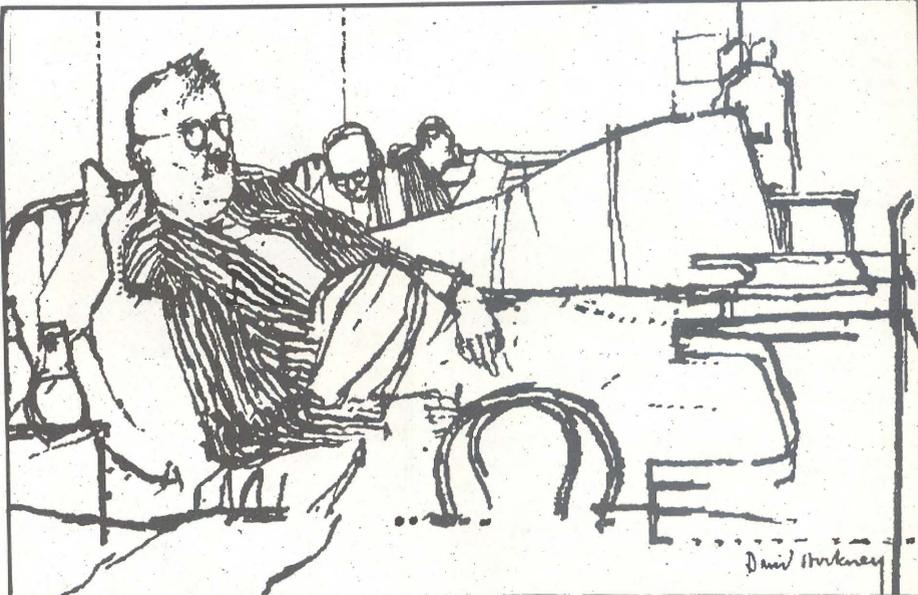
Steward: For a start, the local health authorities will become much smaller. Local councils and the TUC will no longer be able to nominate members. In practice, I don't think this will be a bad thing. From my experience, all these official representatives ever did was carry out the government's plans and introduce cuts in the service.

From now on, hospitals are to be run by managers who will have to operate within fixed budgets. They will be on fixed term contracts and paid with an incentive bonus. But the biggest changes will occur next April when Clarke's internal market system is to be brought in. Under this scheme, each section of the hospital will use its own budget to buy and sell services. Each section will be in competition with the others. As a result, workers will be in direct competition with each other. I'm sure this will mean morale will drop even more. Any element of caring for the patients will become quite incidental.

Some hospitals might decide on purely financial criteria not to offer a full range of medical services. Others might concentrate in specialist fields. Patients will suffer. No longer will they be able to go into their local hospital for treatment. What they need may only be on offer some distance away.

Our own general manager freely admits that you can't market health care the way you would washing machines. He has already told us that his budget is inadequate and that the money is not there to fund the changes.

CS: Can you see anything good in Clarke's reforms?



Steward: Funnily enough, yes. For the first time, some attempt will be made to discover the true cost of the various services. Secondly, the introduction of more computer technology should cut down on a lot of unnecessary paperwork and raise efficiency. Thirdly, management will become much more clearcut. But in whose interests is another matter!

CS: What about the workforce now?

Steward: The nurses are still leaving. Their re-grading scheme just drags on and on. Others just as essential for the hospital, people such as the lab technicians, engineers, pharmacists, clerical staff or porters, they are all fed up as well. The old team spirit has gone.

CS: You give the impression that things are quite bad. Why then has there been no real opposition?

Steward: It is not easy to pinpoint the reason. We, of course, know what is going on. But our unions are quite weak. A lot of our time as shop stewards gets taken up in day-to-day issues, particularly around the various re-grading systems. On the bigger issues, it is generally the bosses who manage to determine the battleground for the struggle. As a result, the unions always appear in a negative light. They always seem to be against what is on offer. We need to get ourselves into a situation where we can be seen to be fighting for something.

What we really need is a nationally co-ordinated campaign that can defend what

is left of the NHS with ideas and plan for a health service that we all deserve.

The recent ambulance dispute showed that there is a lot of public sympathy for us. How to turn that into effective mass action is the problem.

Finally, I want to say that problems are caused for us by some in our ranks who continually put forward their view that nothing can be done until there is a Labour government in power. They are a real pain. They help breed cynicism and pessimism among the ordinary members.

CS: You seem to be very critical of the Labour Party?

Steward: Yes, I am. I remember it was the last Labour government under Callaghan that forced us to strike during the 'winter of discontent'. I also remember Wilson's governments in the sixties.

Each time, our union leaders told us not to rock the boat by fighting for wages since it could damage Labour's electoral chances. Each time we finished up worse off.

No, I don't support Labour at all. I'd rather rely on those who work in the health service and those who need it to defend the NHS than I ever would the Labour Party.

Friday, 29th June was the worst day in the history of the NHS. It was the day that Kenneth Clarke's so-called reform reached the statute books and a bill that could mean an end to the health service as we know it became law.

From Public Service - August issue of NALGO's journal.

Mandy's Diary

July 30th: Women who have been campaigning for rape within marriage to be legally recognised are now beginning to see some success. A husband was jailed for three years today after a judge set a legal precedent and allowed the man to be prosecuted for raping his wife, when they were living apart but not legally separated.

As the law stood, a husband could only be charged with raping his wife if they were legally separated or if there was a court order prohibiting the husband from molesting her.

This was the first case in England and Wales to succeed in changing this aspect of the law. Earlier this year, there was a ruling in Scotland that a husband could be charged with raping his wife even though the couple were living together.

The defence solicitor in this case quoted a statement made by Lord Justice Hale in 1736: that a husband could not be guilty of raping his lawful wife, and that by entering into marriage, a wife had 'given herself' to her husband.

It seems there is a long way to go before wives achieve equality with other women in this respect. Even the prosecuting solicitor argued that a wife should be able to withdraw consent to sex with her husband under certain circumstances. But this argument gives credence to the idea that a wife has automatically given consent to sex, whenever the husband wants it, simply by virtue of having married him.

A woman must have the right to say yes or no, every time, whether or not she is married.

August 6th: Standing in the bus queue this morning, I happened to see a slogan in the back window of a passing car: 'Life's a bitch and then you marry one.'

As if it wasn't bad enough having a woman described as a bitch for all the world to see, and being expected to think it's funny, the really strange thing was that the person driving the car was a woman. Now that's internalised oppression if ever I saw it! Or maybe she's not his wife

August 20th: The government's Social Security Advisory Committee has at least had the

decency not to gloss over the awfulness of life on benefits. In its latest report out this month, it highlights a number of ways in which the situation of claimants has got worse recently.

Claimants living in high-spending local authorities are not receiving enough benefit to compensate them for the 20% poll tax bill they face. The amount is calculated on the average rates of the poll tax charge. The report also expressed concern at the way the poll tax increase will be updated, which will be according to the retail price index rather than the actual increase in poll tax.

Mind you, the difference it makes to any individual is probably in pence rather than pounds, as the rate of Income Support is appallingly low.

Let's hope that the government takes note of its Advisory Committee's report. But I think it's unlikely. They knew what they were doing when they brought in the Social Security cuts. But they didn't care.

August 29th: The old debate about mothers who go out to work causing harm to their children still drags on. You'd think it would have died a death, seeing how it is usually brought out when capitalism wants to force women back into the home and make them work for nothing, whereas, at present, there is quite a campaign to get more married women to go out to work. It just goes to show how complex our society is, I suppose.

Members of the Professional Association of Teachers, meeting in Nottingham about a month ago, heard from a couple of speakers that children from families where both parents

work outside the home are "withdrawn, insecure, unable to express themselves, ill-disciplined and aggressive in their play". These speakers tried to put forward a proposal that for the first five years of a child's life, one parent should be in the home. No prizes for guessing which parent it would be! Opponents of the proposal forced an end to the debate without a vote being taken, stating that the association should not engage in "social engineering and dictating to parents how to conduct themselves."

Interestingly enough, if they had waited until today to hold their meeting, they might have read about research recently carried out in Sweden which proves exactly the opposite:

"Research in Sweden is finding that the most academically successful, creative and popular schoolchildren are those who were cared for at childcare centres from very early in life."

Two groups of children are compared: those who were looked after in daycare centres from before their first birthdays and those who were looked after exclusively by their mothers before starting school.

A psychology lecturer at the University of Wales has carried out similar research in Britain involving 250 children and found that group care for young children led to better social skills as they grew older. Well, it makes sense. Children need a variety of experiences and different people to relate to, just like anyone else. What is important is the quality of care, not whether or not the carer is the child's mother.



Dewsbury 82

On Saturday, 1st September, about 1,000 people marched through Leeds in support of the campaign to defend the Dewsbury 82.

At the rally following the march, a speaker from the Pakistani Workers Association pointed out that ten years ago it was 12 black people, today it is 82. In the face of the increase in racist attacks, unity against racism is essential, particularly in the fight for the right to self-defence. Other speakers reiterated these themes, in particular the rise in racism often in the form of violent attacks.

Groups represented on the march and on the platform at the rally included support groups of other victims of racist attack, for example, the Tasleem Akhtar Memorial Committee (Birmingham) and the Sekhon Family Support Group.

The arrests of the Dewsbury 82 stemmed from a march organised by the fascist group, the British National Party (BNP), in Dewsbury on 24th June, 1989. This march was a deliberate provocation, called as it was in one of the centres of the Muslim community in West Yorkshire. The BNP planned to build on the racist, anti-Muslim tide that was being whipped up at the time of the "Rushdie affair". The march itself was banned. But the local council allowed the rally, held outside the Town Hall. Black people organised a counter-demonstration.

A leaflet by the Dewsbury 82 Defence Campaign describes what happened that day:

"The police action on the day was also one of intimidation and provocation. Over 750 police, some in battle dress, charged the peaceful demonstrators that were opposing the presence of the fascists in Dewsbury. The police wanted a confrontation and mass arrests. Their particular actions on the day ensured that they achieved exactly this.



H. NEWMAN

The Funeral of Kuldeep Singh Sekhon

"On the day, they arrested 59 people, mostly Asian youths. Since that day, fishing raids by the police have netted a further 22, from Leeds, Batley, Dewsbury and Sheffield.

"The courts in turn, have continued the criminalisation process begun by the police. Bail conditions for some of those arrested are on a par with South African "banning orders". Passports have been seized, severe curfews imposed and political activity (public meetings) to prove their innocence have been restricted for many of these defendants."

POLITICAL SHOW TRIAL

Almost one year, after the demonstrations, many of the defendants have been railroaded through the magistrates' courts. Some have been acquitted. Others have received heavy fines, of up to £500. 25 of the defendants, who face the heaviest charges, stand trial in the Leeds Crown Court, starting on Monday, 3rd September.

ATTACK ON BLACK COMMUNITY

The pattern of events is familiar to black people in Britain. Individual black people or whole communities are attacked by racist or fascist individuals or groups.

The police move in. Instead of offering any support to black people, they turn on them.

In 1982, a campaign was built to defend the Bradford 12, charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. Their successful acquittal in the court was a result of wide mobilisation of the black community. The same pattern has been repeated in defence campaigns in Newham, East London.

More recently, following the murder of Kuldeep Singh Sekhon, in Southall, in November of last year, the community in Southall mobilised for a Day of Remembrance on January 31st, 1990, the day of his funeral.

A recent article by members of the Sekhon Family Support Group described the broad mobilisation of different sections of the community in Southall for that day, as well as pointing to new features in this mobilisation, especially the role of women.

In the face of racist attacks, it has always been the black national minority communities in Britain who have been the main and leading force in the movement of resistance. It is crucial that white anti-racists give their support to this fightback but also that they recognise that their role is one of support and not of leadership. It is black people who face racist oppression and it is only they who can determine the direction their resistance takes.

repression..  ..and  resistance

SELF DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE!

FREE Kiranjit!

Rabia Janjua MUST STAY

Kiranjit Ahluwalia is serving a life sentence after being found guilty, in December of last year, of the murder of her husband. The couple were married in 1979 and from the earliest days of their marriage, Kiranjit suffered humiliation, restriction and violence:

"For ten, long years, Kiranjit was subjected to humiliation and treated like a slave....Violence was an everyday occurrence. Her small sons faced it too and were terrified of their father. Kiranjit herself was slapped, kicked and punched. She was beaten with belts, shoes and pieces of furniture. She was raped and sexually abused. She was threatened with knives....."

Kiranjit tried to stop her husband's violence by getting an injunction from the courts. She also went to her own family. Neither helped her. Finally, in May 1989 after a night of violence in which her husband beat her and put a hot iron on her cheek, she finally threw petrol on him and set the room on fire. She has said that she did not intend to kill him but to inflict pain - "Just enough for him to know what it was like to feel pain."

Kiranjit was convicted of murder by a an all-white jury, predominantly men. In spite of previous cases where women who killed their husbands have been acquitted, or given light sentences, on the basis of self defence, and mounting evidence showing the accumulative effect of years of domestic violence, she was given a life sentence.

Crawley Women's Aid, Crawley Women's Centre and Southall Black Sisters have started a campaign to re-open Kiranjit's case on the basis that she is not guilty and should be freed.

The campaign gives the example of the campaign to free Iqbal Begum, supported by Birmingham Black Sisters. Iqbal was released following this campaign.

Kiranjit too can be freed if there is enough support for her. . . For more information and details of what you can do, write to Southall Black Sisters, at the address below.

Rabia Janjua is a 27 year old woman from Pakistan. She has two children, Ali aged 4 years and Zubair aged 5 months. She has lived in Britain for five years. Both her children were born here.

Rabia is now faced with removal. The Home Office has declared her an illegal entrant. Despite representations, the Secretary of State, David Waddington has refused to reconsider her case. He has stated that there are no 'compelling compassionate' grounds for reversing his decision.

On 6th March of this year, Rabia was taken by police and immigration officers to a detention centre. She was separated from her children, in spite of the fact that she was breast-feeding the younger child. The Home Office was intending that she should be put on a plane to Pakistan the same day and was only prevented from doing this, when MP's, different organisations and the press intervened.

Rabia's story shows how black women are doubly trapped by Britain's racist immigration laws and pressured by their insecure position in Britain to put up with violence and degrading treatment.

The Home Office say that Rabia is an "illegal entrant" because when she came to Britain, her husband told her to get a visitor's visa. When she arrived, her husband took away her passport. He was so violent that she was hospitalised twice. When Rabia went to the courts for help, her husband then informed the Home Office that she had entered the country on false grounds (at his instructions!) in revenge.

If Rabia is sent back to Pakistan, she will face either death by stoning or up to 10 years imprisonment and 30 lashes. She is accused of sex outside marriage as a result of being raped by the man who became her husband. When still in Pakistan, she knew it would be impossible to prove the rape charges and agreed to marry him.

In Britain, Rabia faces the inhuman immigration law. In Pakistan, she may face death.

The Home Office must be forced to recognise the danger she faces if forced to go back and allow her to stay permanently. Rabia and her two children have the right to remain here permanently, free from violence and state intimidation.



For more details of the campaign, contact:

Southall Black Sisters,
53 Norwood Road,
Southall, Middlesex,
Tel: 081-571-9595.



A Society Still Divided.....



The infamous wall has come down. Monetary union has already been established. A date for formal political unity has been set. But Germany remains divided. The ruling coalition in East Germany recently fell apart. The economy is about to collapse unless German banks come up with a massive aid package. Whatever happened in the past, social and economic justice in Germany remains a distant dream of the future.

Above: Riot police turn out for the May Day parade, Kreuzberg, West Berlin.
 Top Right: beggar on the main tourist street, Kurfurstendam, West Berlin.
 Below Right: Steel monoliths engraved with images depicting the achievements of socialism, Marx-Engels Platz, East Berlin.
 Left: Statue of woman worker, Alexanderplatz, East Berlin.



Photos by Digger

THE COST OF UNITY



Firemen join thousands of workers in a one-hour strike in East Berlin.

Unemployment in East Germany is rising at the rate of 25,000 a week. It is likely to reach 1.5 million by the end of the year out of a workforce of 9.5 million.

Agriculture is in chaos. Potato and tomato crops are rotting in the fields. Farmers have poured thousands of gallons of milk on to the streets because they cannot sell it. Others dumped cow dung on the steps of parliament, in protest.

Labour unrest has grown among steel workers and shipbuilders, among others. Miners are concerned about their jobs as officials talk about the industry being beyond rescue.

The Treuhandanstalt is a new organisation set up to be responsible for the 8,000 formerly state-owned companies. A recent study showed that of 2,361 enterprises, 695 were in danger of going bankrupt. These employed 43% of the workforce. Another 736 were potentially "viable" but would need DM8 billion investment.

After the euphoria over unity

a year ago, the costs of unity, or rather annexation by West Germany are now being counted.

TIMETABLE FIXED

The timetable for the process is now set. Monetary union was complete on July 1st of this year. October 3rd will see official unification of the two states and the first all-German elections will be held on 2nd December.

Chancellor Kohl attempted to get the date for elections brought forward. The West German government is tired of obstacles put forward by the government of East Germany and its demands for billions of Deutsch Marks in subsidies for its welfare state. It also fears that economic collapse in the East will lead to a reaction from East Germans in the form of objections to unity and from West Germans in objections to the massive amounts of tax-payers money that are being used to subsidise the East German economy.

At the beginning of October, East Germany will become merely the twelfth Land, or

regional state in the Federal Republic, with government power residing only in Bonn, where the lower house, the Bundestag, will be expanded by 144 delegates to 663.

It will delegate five representatives to the upper house, the Bundesrat, until the five new Lander are established by elections on October 14th.

The elections in December are likely to be dominated by the three big parties of West Germany: the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Free Democrats. The new electoral law has been framed in such a way to make cross-party alliances impossible. It seems likely that the smaller parties are the ones that will lose out.

The unity of East and West will then be shown more clearly to be a takeover by the West. Ironically, it is likely that those who led the revolution in the East will not be represented in the new parliament. ■

PRIVATISATION

It is hardly surprising that the people of Bitterfeld are angry.

Chemiekombinat Bitterfeld is one of East Germany's largest conglomerates, but its future is full of uncertainty. It has to privatise itself and split itself up into units of a more manageable size. Then it must find capital to re-equip.

Chemiekombinat's financial position is rendered more precarious by the sheer scale of the pollution it causes. It will have to spend tens of billions of marks as East Germany moves closer to West Germany and adopts the west's standards for pollution control.

In the meantime, with machinery that is mostly 40 to 50 years old, it is unable to compete on level terms with western industry. Cheaper, high-quality produce imported from the west will undermine much of its business and the result will surely be mass unemployment. In a 30,000 workforce, there are 12,500 administrative and marketing staff... thousands will be made redundant.

From the Independent on Sunday, May 1990.

A Nation Without a State

Last year, the death of a Kurd in a British prison enabled some brief attention to be paid in the press to the issue of those Kurdish people in Western countries whose lives would be at risk if they were to return to their homeland. Few people in this country had any idea where the Kurds live, why they are in such a difficult situation or what they are actually wanting.

With the more recent events in the Middle East, the question of self-determination has been raised in relation to the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Little mention however has been made of self-determination for the Kurdish people. This is a question that should be put firmly on the agenda in any settlement of issues in the Middle East.

A NATION WITHOUT A STATE

The Kurds are the largest nation in the world which does not have its own state. Approximately 18 million of them live in the Middle East, mainly in the mountainous areas of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq and along the Iran-Iraq border. They have lived in this area for over two thousand years, tracing their origins back to the Medes, who together with the Persians, overwhelmed the Babylonian Empire over two and a half millennia ago.

They find themselves today in the unenviable position of being divided between three states in each of which they are in a minority, facing centralising regimes which either suppress or severely limit all expression of identity for the national minorities within their borders.

ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The root of the Kurdish problem can be found in the carving up of the Middle East by the Western colonial powers in the early part of this century. Iraq, for example, was a pure invention of the British ruling class. It was in order to preserve oil and commercial interests that the British government decided in November 1920, to create the state of Iraq by forcibly annexing the Kurdish province of Mosul to the Arab governates of Baghdad and Basra. This was done on the grounds that Iraq would not be economically viable without the petroleum and agricultural riches to be found in Kurdistan. (In the Western history books, this is put rather differently: the League of Nations is generally

reported as awarding Mosul to the British.)

Saddam Hussein justifies his annexation of Kuwait by recognising the territory has an historic attachment to the Iraqi province of Basra. Imposed colonial borders are indeed at the root of many problems in the Middle East, not least of which is the issue of Kurdistan.

Independent Kurdish states have only ever existed for short periods of time and even then have only been able to embrace a fraction of the Kurdish people. At the end of the First World War, it appeared that a Kurdish state might be established out of the ruin of the old Ottoman Empire. But the armies of the Turkish leader, Kemal Ataturk, put a stop to that as they sought to lay the basis for the modern Turkish Republic.

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the Kurds had some success in establishing a republic based on Mahabad. But this was suppressed by the Iranian army with great bloodshed. Many Kurds look at this period as being the closest they ever came to having their own state.

A PEOPLE UNDER THREAT

In the course of conflicts in the Middle East over the last few years, 60,000 Kurds have fled across the Turkish border; 150,000 have fled or been expelled across in Iran and half a million have been deported to detention camps in the deserts of Southern Iraq.

During the latter days of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi bombers dropped nerve gas on the town of Halabja, following its capture by members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Iranian troops. Over 6,000 people were killed in a matter of minutes.

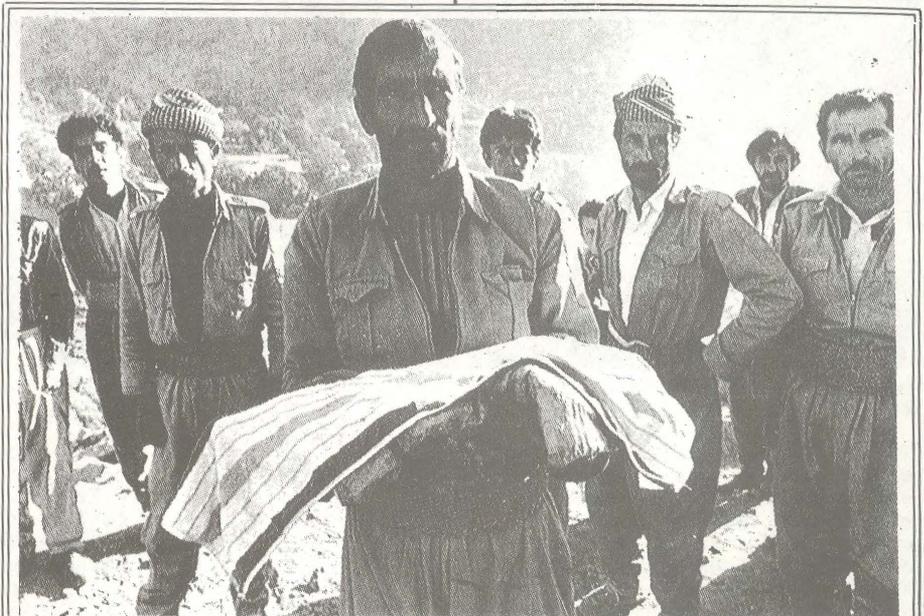
With the end of the Gulf war in August 1988, Hussein moved 60,000 troops into the Kurdish areas in the north. A furious assault was followed up by the total destruction of 3,000 out of 4,000 existing Kurdish towns and villages.

British troops took Mesopotamia from the Ottoman Turks during the First World War. In 1920, the League of Nations gave Britain a mandate over the area. Britain helped Mesopotamian leaders set up a government in 1921. The leaders named the country Iraq and elected King Faisal I the first monarch. Britain kept control over Iraq's economic, foreign and military affairs.

Taken from The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol.10, 1990.

Iraq was an artificial country created by Britain with no natural borders. It includes the marsh Arabs of the South, the Kurds of the northern mountains, the Sunni Muslims of the area between Baghdad and Kurkuk and the Shia of Kerbala and Najjaf.

Taken from The Independent on Sunday, August 5th, 1990.



A Kurd from Iraq mourns his dead baby in a refugee camp

Western Troops Out of Iraq Iraqi Troops Out of Kuwait

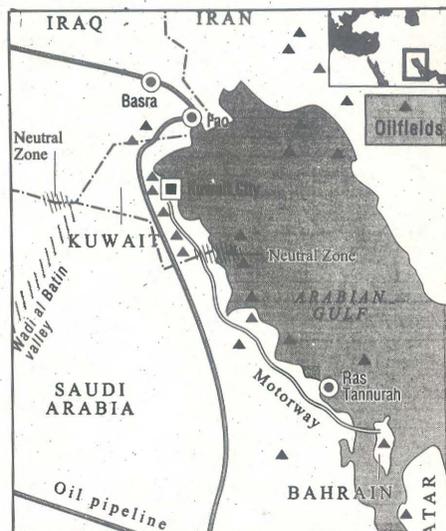
At the time of writing, yet another war in the Middle East seems to be imminent. US and British forces, along with some other contingents, have gathered in Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to defend it against Iraqi aggression. However, there was no evidence that Iraq intended to attack Saudi Arabia, whose vast spaces would have seriously taxed Iraq's ability to deploy its forces effectively and keep them supplied. Furthermore, Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, must have known that, if invading Kuwait involved a calculated risk of western countermeasures, an attack on Saudi Arabia would certainly invite military action.

The aim of concentrating a strong US-dominated military force in the Gulf was clearly to prepare the way for military action against Iraq if other forms of pressure failed to make it withdraw from Kuwait.

The events of the last few weeks will have a lasting impact on the region. The other Arab states of the Gulf, as well as most of the rest of the Arab world, were opposed to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but, out of fear of Iraqi military might, hesitated to do anything about it (apart from calling another Arab summit, which is usually a way of appearing to take action while doing nothing).

their weakness and dependence on the USA more clearly than ever before, and they will be left in a weakened position, as a result.

The Palestinians saw in Iraq a state which was standing up to the imperialist powers, and which would be prepared to take on Israel. This is a measure of their desperation after over two and a half years of the Uprising: Saddam Hussein has been no friend in the past, and has always taken on those he thought were weak, not those he knew in advance might hammer his forces - as Israel could. When Saddam Hussein is defeated, it could have a negative effect on Palestinian morale.



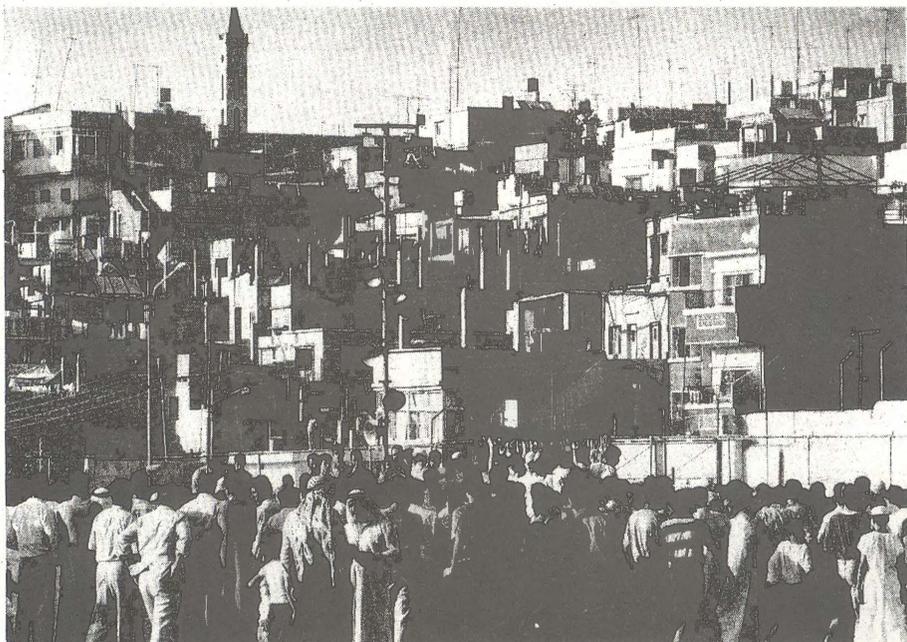
appearing to align itself with Iraq. (The PLO has, in fact, condemned the Iraqi invasion, but refused to support military action or sanctions against Iraq.) Israel sees the Gulf conflict as a welcome diversion of international attention away from Palestine, just as the Intifada was approaching its 1000th day on September 3rd.

HYPOCRITES

Of course, the Palestinians are right when they point to the dishonesty of the West's attitude to Iraq. Britain and the USA say that it is inadmissible for one country to occupy another and to annexe it, and yet Israel has ruled the West Bank and Gaza Strip for 23 years without the West ordering it out, let alone sending a task force to evict it.

If Kuwait did not have oil which the western economies need, at a relatively low price, it would surely have been left to Saddam Hussein's tender mercies.

After all, when Morocco occupied the Western Sahara, denying self-determination to its people, the West did not intervene. When Indonesia occupied East Timor and butchered one third of its people in the process, nothing was done to make it withdraw.



In Jordan, there is strong opposition to the US presence in the Middle East.

It was only when the USA made clear that it was prepared to send its forces in, that the rulers of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states began to show signs of having backbones after all, and supported stronger action against Iraq. This performance revealed

Israel was delighted at the chaos caused in the Arab world by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. It believes that the conflicts that have been stirred up will last some time, weakening Israel's enemies. It considers that the PLO has shot itself in the foot by

Kuwaiti oppositionists are fighting against the Iraqi occupation forces. They want the independence of their country but they are against the deployment of western troops in the area, which they see as contrary to the interests of the entire region.

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In the last ten years, the USA has invaded Grenada and Panama to change their governments, funded the destabilisation of Nicaragua, and it remains in breach of over 200 treaties signed with Native Americans concerning their lands and rights. Britain has that unresolved matter of Ireland on its doorstep. 800 years after it first occupied Ireland, its people are still denied re-unification in a 32-county republic.

The hypocrisy extends to Western dealings with Iraq itself. The West backed Iraq against Iranian claims that Iraq had used poison gas against its forces. Iran, after all, was meant to be the bad guy, and Iraq was a friend.

The West's attitude convinced Saddam that he could also get away with using nerve and other gases against the Kurds within Iraq's borders, who were fighting for self-rule within Iraq. Tens of thousands were killed by gas attacks, of which that on the town of Halabja was only the worst. Saddam was right: he did get away with it. The West, the Soviet Union and other states, tut-tutted and then it was business as usual. As a result, the Western forces sent to Saudi Arabia will face an enemy whose weapons include many made in France and some in Britain, who has developed chemical weapons using equipment supplied by West Germany and which has benefited from large transfusions of US dollars over the last ten years, given to Iraq by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

However, though the West's attitude is hypocritical, this does not make Iraq's seizure of Kuwait in the last bit acceptable.

Kuwait's rulers led a parasitic existence, and their regime was repressive (although liberal compared to the Iraqi one). But this is besides the point.

The principle of national self-determination must be upheld for all nations and countries, whether outsiders like their regimes and social systems or not. Iraqi forces must be removed from Kuwait. The best means would be by sanctions, rigorously applied, backed by military and naval forces of a predominantly Third World character. Western forces will just make matters worse, reinforcing imperialist domination of the area in the short term and allowing the mass murderer, Saddam Hussein, to pose as a victim of imperialist aggression and champion of the Arabs. The Western troops should be pulled out.

View of the PLO

"We are in no way ignoring the principle of self-determination for Kuwaitis. We Palestinians have suffered more from denial of self-determination than anyone. But the question is: how do we get a solution to this question?"

Nabil Shaath, a spokesman for the PLO, and a top adviser to Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, addressed a meeting of European solidarity organisations in Geneva on August 28th. He said that he wanted to respond to misrepresentations of the PLO's position on the conflict in the Gulf.

of Israel! In the three months before August 2nd (the date of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait: Ed.), the USA vetoed seven resolutions on Palestine. Yet it had not hesitated at all to press for UN condemnation of Iraq.

Shaath said that, during the period of the US-PLO dialogue, the USA would make an issue of anything that any PLO official said that upset the Israeli government. He said that the PLO would be told that its representative in Djibouti had remarked one night that Israel was committing atrocities, and the USA would turn round and accuse the PLO of offending



Palestinians on the West Bank continually face the forces of an occupying power.

Shaath said that the PLO wanted the same principles which it wished to see applied in Palestine to be applied in the case of Iraq and Kuwait. It wanted a peaceful solution, reached by negotiation, and based upon recognition of the right to national self-determination.

He said that Palestinians had noticed the difference between the USA's approach to the Gulf and its approach to the Palestinians.

The USA not only vetoed UN resolutions critical of Israel. It has even made it clear that it will veto any proposal to send a UN fact-finding mission to the Israeli-occupied territories to investigate alleged human rights violations, as the sending of such a mission would itself imply criticism

Israel and going back on its commitment to work for peace. Shaath contrasted the 'high standards' which the USA set for the PLO with the license it gave to Israel, with its attitude to Iraq.

Nevertheless, he maintained that the PLO wanted an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, and a western withdrawal from the Gulf. The PLO would be willing to accept UN forces or an Arab force, but not US forces in the region. It had refused to back the Arab League condemnation of Iraq mainly because this was very strongly worded, and if the PLO had backed it, it would have been difficult for it to act as a mediator in seeking a peaceful settlement, though it naturally also had to think about the welfare of 350,000 Palestinians living in Kuwait.

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

LONG MARCH TO FREEDOM



Ballymurphy women on the march, 12th August 1990.

Photo by Digger

On Sunday, August 12th, many thousands marched in Belfast to mark the 19th anniversary of the imposition of internment without trial. They were joined by delegates from Herri Batasuna in the Basque country, 55 representatives of Irish Northern Aid from North America and a 120-strong delegation from the Troops Out Movement, which received its now traditional rapturous reception as people lining the roadside warmly applauded the solidarity being shown with the struggle for freedom.

The rally was chaired by Sinn Fein Councillor, Fra McCann. He introduced Biki Gorostiaga to address the rally on behalf of Herri Batasuna. She spoke in her native tongue and English, and giving solidarity greetings in Irish, identified the common ground between the Irish struggle and the struggle of the Basque people.

Janet Clarke of the Troops Out Movement drew parallels with the treatment meted out to

Irish people and the black community in England by the same right-wing and racist regime. Irene McDonnell of Noraid spoke of the harassment and constant surveillance inflicted on the Noraid tour by the crown forces.

Rapturous and defiant applause greeted the introduction of Martin Galvin, an American solidarity worker who had been excluded by the British from the Six Counties in 1984. This was the year when a murderous RUC attack on the internment rally killed John Downes and injured scores of other people. Galvin said of the exclusion order:

"It was supposed to be just another insignificant extension of a well-known British tactic of ignoring, censoring or excluding any view in opposition to British rule in Ireland. It was a tactic which uses censorship on the TV and radio, excludes Sinn Fein from peace talks, and a tactic which was now supposed to apply to Americans

who simply told the truth about what they had seen of British rule in Ireland."

Sinn Fein General Secretary, Tom Hartley, gave the final address of the day. He said that the march for freedom on August 12th reflected the long march of the Irish people towards their ultimate destination, a free and independent Ireland.

(Information from An Phoblacht/Republican News, 16th August 1990.)



LETTERS

Dear Class Struggle,

What an example the Women's Front of Norway is to us - valuable because it is not just a talking shop but has sustained a long, difficult and successful campaign against pornography. One message that came through to me was the strength women gained from working together on such an issue, and how much they were able to learn from being active on an important issue and then following that activity with discussions, study and more activity.

The article about their campaign (in the last issue of 'Class Struggle'), prompted me to re-read a book by American feminist, Andrea Dworkin, 'Letters from a War Zone'. This is full of speeches and articles written by her on pornography and related issues. Although starting from an intellectual background, she is authoritative, like the Women's Front, because she bases her work on investigation, activity and immersion in, the lives of ordinary women.

The main message which comes across from her work is that pornography is not about images and ideas but is based on the reality of brutal and widespread abuse of women by men. The women used to make the pornography, especially the more violent types, have nearly all suffered sexual abuse as children, and continue to be threatened and intimidated by men throughout

their lives. In addition, the pornographic material plays a major role in sexual abuse of all sorts, being used by men both before and during rape, gang rape, murder and sexual abuse of children.

The extent of this sexual violence is astounding. In the USA, one woman is raped every three minutes. 44% of adult women in the USA have been raped at least once. 41% of all rapes are committed by two or more men. There are an estimated 16,000 new cases of father-daughter incest each year, and in the present generation of children, 38% of girls are sexually molested.

Thus we fight pornography not only because it degrades women and reduces them purely to sexual objects but also because it is intimately bound up with the reality of physical and sexual attacks on women and girls which is a crucial part of their oppression.

As well as being knowledgeable and hard-hitting, Andrea Dworkin writes with a brief clarity which is a pleasure in itself... Dip into the book and you won't be disappointed.

Yours in rebellion,

A Somerset reader

Dear Class Struggle,

The issue of homelessness really hit me hard the other week when I opened up my evening copy of the Bradford paper, the **Telegraph and Argus**. The headlines

read: 'Young, alone and homeless', and below was a photograph of a teenager asleep in a subway.

The accompanying article quoted a local charity worker saying that the known number of homeless young people in Bradford was just the tip of the iceberg. She said it was impossible to know how many Bradford people lacked a roof over their heads or were forced to sleep rough.

Among the other statistics provided was that Bradford Council has 380 families classed as homeless who are having to live in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. I knew about those who live (if that's the right word) in those squalid Bed and Breakfast hotels in London and I've seen photos of Cardboard City. But what I did not appreciate is just how widespread a problem homelessness is locally.

I read the **Telegraph and Argus** the next day with interest. Its editorial said:

'Bradford is facing problems over homeless people, but it is doubtful if they are any worse than those confronting most other towns and cities.'

The photograph in the **Telegraph and Argus** was not taken hundreds of miles away; probably less than four miles from where I live. The teenager in the photograph was probably not much older than my own lad. And there must be hundreds like him in the same boat.

What an indictment of our so-called civilised society! How do you start to do something about it?

A Bradford reader

Who are the REAL criminals?

Former Det.Supt.George Reade, who headed the inquiry into the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974 and two other former West Midlands detectives have been interrogated under caution by officers from the Devon and Cornwall police.

Forensic tests had indicated that notes of an alleged interview with Richard McIlkenny, one of the Birmingham Six, were not all written at the same time, as the officers had claimed in court.

This throws doubt on the convictions of all six prisoners. The investigators

were so concerned by the answers that they decided not to wait until their full report was ready. They alerted the Home Secretary immediately on Bank Holiday Tuesday, and he decided to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

This is not the first time. The appeal was dismissed in 1988 by Lord Lane, who claimed that no new evidence had come to light. Even at that time, the forensic evidence against the Six had been discredited. But the forces of British so-called justice would not admit they had made a mistake.

As long ago as 1980, Lord Denning said that the consequences of the possibility that the police were guilty of wholesale perjury, and assaulting prisoners in their custody to extract confessions, was too awful to contemplate.

The Birmingham Six have always said they were innocent, their confessions were fabricated and they were beaten up in police custody. Maybe, at long last, they will now be believed. But nothing can compensate them for the dreadful injustice they have suffered.

In the new 'October', we are pleased to reprint an English summary of a book by a leading comrade in the Norwegian Marxist-Leninist Party (AKP-ML). The AKP (ML) have for many years been active in the Women's Front in Norway. The contribution by this comrade, Kjersti Ericsson, is therefore based firmly in a combination of theory and practice. The article on Feminism and the Left in India and Sri Lanka also shows how active women have been. The article makes it clear that the role of women and the women's movement is being debated and discussed at many different levels within the left. The basic position of the RCL is that we have to apply the scientific method of Marxism to the question of women but that many of the positions held by the left on women are a crude economist version of Marxism. In this issue of 'October', we try to take this debate forward by looking at some of the arguments around the basis of women's oppression, an important question if we aim to build a society which removes the basis for oppression as a pre-condition for moving to full liberation. We look at the question of reproductive rights, a key aspect of women's oppression. And we try to put the struggle for women's liberation within the context of the overall struggle against imperialism. We hope that this journal will take the debate forward. We look forward to hearing the views of our readers and receiving contributions from you.

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