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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

Stop this bloody war!

# Break the



Colin Powell conceals the collateral damage

# wall of lies!

By Eric Heffer MP

The first casualty of any war is truth, and particularly of an imperialist war where the truth is not wanted by either side.

The truth was a casualty of the First World War, with a mass of lies from both sides. And it has happened in this war too.

People said that there would be no great numbers of civilian casualties in Iraq. It was not true. And as the war goes on, the numbers of civilian casualties, men, women and children, in Ira-

q, will grow greater every day. It is clear that precision bombing by itself will not win the war for the Americans and the British, and that therefore there will be greater mass bombing.

The horror has been extended on the other side of this imperialist conflict by Saddam himself. He has let out oil into the Gulf, destroying marine life and bird life, and that is typical of the logic of this war.

Things will not get better. We will probably see poison gas used, maybe even nuclear weapons.

That is why it is absolutely vital for the labour movement to make a great mobilisation to get a ceasefire and then bring the war to an end as quickly as possible.

It does not look particularly hopeful at the moment, but the campaign will grow. There is already a great anti-war movement in other European countries, like Italy and Germany. There is a big anti-war movement in the

United States.

There is a great mass of people in our country who are opposed to war, but are not getting a square deal from the media on the facts of the war.

And they are not getting a lead

from the Labour front bench either. The position of the Labour front bench is shameful and needs to be opposed. I hope the rank and file of the Labour Party will vigorously oppose the war and let the front bench know about it.

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

# Gorbachev's crackdown

By Mark Osborn

The central Soviet government is continuing its crackdown.

From 1 February the Soviet army will be entitled to patrol the streets of major Soviet cities. According to 'Interfax' joint police and army patrols will take place "when the situation becomes complicated". One Soviet MP, Sergei Yushenkov, described the new order as "something like a state of emergency".

In a decree issued last weekend president Gorbachev gave new powers to the KGB who are now entitled to enter premises "without hindrance" to investigate "economic crimes".

Soviet troops opened fire on a Lithuanian government car on Thursday night, 24th, wounding two people. Some of the six people arrested after the incident are reported to have been beaten up.

Earlier in the week Moscow's troops had occupied a newspaper store in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius.

An opinion poll printed in the Riga newspaper 'Diena' this week suggests that 67% of Russian speakers in Latvia (where they are nearly half the population) support Latvian independence. So do nearly 100% of Latvian speakers.

The conflict with the Baltics was brought to a head on 7 January with the decision to send central troops to enforce conscription in western Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia and the Baltics.

In all, about one in five conscripts have failed to report for the Autumn draft. Most of the conscripts have signed up instead for civilian service organised by the Baltic governments.

By mid-January, for example, in Estonia 8,000 young men were doing civilian ser-

vice, with only around 1,000 draft dodgers. The Soviet government does not recognise civilian service.

In the Georgian republic, where compliance with the call-up is ten per cent, president Zviad Gamsakhurdia warned of civil war if the army attempted to occupy Georgia. He said that the Georgian parliament would keep a law passed in December abolishing Red Army conscription in Georgia.

Georgia is to conscript 12,000 youth into a National Guard, to be formed next month to supplement the 20,000 militia of Georgia's Interior Ministry. Gamsakhurdia said that one of the roles of the new National Guard would be to defend Georgia from the Red Army.

Georgia considers itself in a 'transition period to independence'.

One hundred liberal intellectuals, including world chess champion Gary Kasparov have published a direct attack on Gorbachev. They blame him for violence in the Baltics and say he is leading the country back to "labour camps, purges, fear, hunger and destruction".

Sixty producers, playwrights and actors have signed an open letter denouncing the 'garrotte of censorship' on the state media.

300,000 marched in Moscow to protest at the army murders in Vilnius.

As Gorbachev's base narrows, the Soviet economy staggers from disaster to disaster.

Last week's abolition, at a few hours' notice, of the large denomination 50 and 100 Rouble (which formed 35% of all cash notes) caused widespread panic. The government said that this 'reform' was aimed against black market operators, but ordinary people, with savings held under their beds, have been hit hard.



## Willis on his knees

Norman Willis *curtseys* to Princess Di...the *Sun* gleefully printed this picture to show that the leaders of the Labour movement are idiots. Let's hope they don't have another picture of Willis licking the boots of the military

top brass. Last week he put out a TUC statement blathering about the "positive developments" which will come out of the war - see page 15 for report.

## Poll tax non-payers declared "guilty until proved innocent"

By Cate Murphy

Desperation has forced the Tories to change the rules on poll tax collection, as non-payment levels remain high.

New powers will allow councils to issue liability orders themselves, instead of having to go through magistrates' courts as at present. The Tories originally hoped that the threat of a court summons would be enough to frighten people into paying. In fact the mass turn-outs at courts have caused chaos.

With over six million summonses due to be issued this year, according to the Audit Commission, magistrates have complained that they just can't cope.

Hearings to issue liability orders still face massive resistance. Successful instances of court proceedings being delayed, disrupted, or cancelled - as happened in Southwark recently - have encouraged further protests.

The Tories' response is a further attack on civil liberties. Councils no longer have to go through long and costly court hearings to claim this unjust and undemocratic tax; instead, liability orders will drop through non-payers' doors with no warning. You can appeal to a magistrates' court, but how many people know how to go about that?

The onus will be shifted from councils having to prove that someone has been correctly billed for the tax to the individual proving that he or she hasn't.

To date, councils have had

little success in using liability orders to raise payment levels. Despite it being a criminal offence not to return the form giving details of your employer, very few people have been intimidated into returning it.

Given their record so far of zealously implementing the tax, Labour councils will no doubt welcome this latest Tory trick.

Oh, there'll be protestations about the "injustice", the "attack on civil liberties" it entails, but Labour councils will clutch at this lifeline the Tories have thrown them. With non-payment levels running as high as 40 per cent in some inner-city areas, the next budget-setting round due, and local elections looming in May, Labour councils will be under pressure to raise collection rates by using this change in the law.

Labour Party members need to put on pressure in the other direction. Constituency Labour Parties should call on councillors *not* to issue liability orders or to process warrant sales or wage and benefit deductions.

Stepping up the campaign among council workers, too, is a priority: a campaign to prevent cooperation with processing and sending out liability orders should be linked to the escalating fight against job and service cuts.

Despite an extra £1 billion which Heseltine has got out of the Treasury, poll tax bills next year will average £380. The Tories know that the tax could still bring about their downfall.

## China: stop the secret trials

By Cheung Siu Ming

Last year the Chinese government massacred an unknown number of students and workers in Tiananmen Square.

Now the Chinese regime has chosen this month to stage a series of trials of survivors, when the world's attention is focussed on the Gulf.

Wang Dan, who headed the regime's list of the 'most wanted' student leaders, has just been sentenced to four years in jail.

The government has refused to allow outside press or observers to attend. The trial, they say, has 'nothing to do with foreigners'.

A delegation consisting mainly of overseas Chinese (including some who still hold PRC citizenship) who travelled to Beijing attempting to observe the trials were detained and then expelled on 22 January.

The fact that these trials are now taking place, with the National People's Congress coming up in March, may suggest that the different factions within the party have patched up a compromise not to carry out extensive purges within the party.

The Chinese government should be bombarded with letters of protest against these secret trials. Call for the trials to be stopped, the charges to be dropped, and for all those detained for exercising their political rights - whether already sentenced or not - to be released immediately.



Wang Dan

## Beatrice Offeh must stay!

Beatrice Offeh is a 25 year old woman from Lewisham who is being threatened with deportation. She has been living in this country for seven years and has a young son who is a British citizen.

Like thousands of other black people, Beatrice lost her rights when the racist 1988 Immigration Act became law. Her only recognised legal defence is the technicalities of the case and she cannot rely on this for her security.

The Home Office has backed down before. We can make it back down again.

**Picket to save Beatrice Offeh**

Picket: 9.30am, Thursday 31 January, Thanet House in the Strand (opposite the High Court)

Contact: 081 692 1308

### Oppose the crackdown!

Invite a speaker from the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc to your Labour Party or trade union.

Write/affiliate to CSWEB: 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

Affiliations: large organisations

£10: small £5: waged individuals £5 unwaged £2.

### New CSWEB publication: 'Will The Soviet Union Survive?'

A guide to the Soviet economic crisis. 60 pence plus 27 pence postage, from CSWEB.

## Birmingham Six daughter appeals for justice

"In November 1974, the six men were arrested for the Birmingham pub bombings. They were mercilessly beaten and mentally tortured, until four of the men signed confessions. From those very early days the six men have protested their innocence. We have had many setbacks. The most recent and devastating was the last Court of Appeal hearing in 1987/88. We had observers from all around the world present and they were appalled at how the case of the men was treated in court.

Our families had built up their hopes that at last justice was going to prevail, but it was not to be. On 28 January 1988 the Birmingham Six were sent back

to prison to serve out the remainder of their sentences, which in fact are twenty-one life sentences each.

Now we are in the year 1991 and still the men remain incarcerated. Our hopes and prayers are relying on the Court of Appeal admitting that this case has been a miscarriage of justice and exonerating the men. The Court will hear fifty 'new' pieces of evidence and any law-trusting person would say that they must be released.

It is time that all our pain and suffering was brought to an end. Seventeen years is a horrendously long time to wait for justice, but it is not too late."

Maggie McIlkenny



Birmingham Six campaigners outside West Midlands police HQ. In the centre, holding Birmingham Six placards, is Anne Farrell, one of the daughters of Richard McIlkenny, one of the Birmingham Six who is imprisoned at Gartree prison. Photo: Mark Salmon

# 'Something has to be done about Saddam'

"Yes, the war stinks. The bar-room patriots and their obscene tabloid press made me sick. So do the Tories. But even so, something has got to be done about Saddam Hussein! Bush and the Tories are trying to do it — and I'm backing them on this one."

That is probably the most common argument *Socialist Organiser* encounters from people who, however reluctantly, support this war. It is a common point of view amongst Labour supporters especially.

*Socialist Organiser* agrees that "something has to be done about Saddam Hussein". For over a decade we have been saying just that. So have the rest of today's anti-war left — all the left papers, and prominent individuals like Jeremy Corbyn, the anti-war MP for Islington North. That's what we said when the Tories and the Americans were giving Saddam Hussein political, military and technological backing against Iran.

That's what we said when we tried to tell the British labour movement about Saddam Hussein's savage, annihilating persecution of the Iraqi left, and about the slaughter of Iraq's Kurdish minority, on whom Saddam Hussein's army practiced its poison gas techniques. "Something", we said, "has to be done about Saddam Hussein". We say it now, too.

The question is: *what* is to be done, and *who* will do it.

Bush, Major and their allies who say they "want to do something" about Saddam Hussein are the leaders of the states which helped create and build him up in the first place. Even so, if it were possible to "take out" Saddam Hussein, freeing both Kuwait and the people of Iraq, without killing tens of thousands of people, without creating ecological disaster, without sowing the seeds of a protracted series of wars in the Middle East, then no rational socialist or democrat could object.

It can't be done like that: big scale slaughter and ecological disaster are already upon us little more than a week into a war that is likely to be a long one. Other hor-

rors will follow. The US will bomb Iraq into the Stone Age if necessary — just as it did in Cambodia 20 years ago. This method of "doing something about" Saddam Hussein has made the butcher a hero of tens of millions of Arabs outside Iraq, pushed Iraqis who loathe the regime into supporting Iraq against the great military onslaught from the air.

If it is measured in terms of lost human lives, and by material destruction, then "doing something about" Saddam Hussein is vastly more costly and horrible than doing nothing.

But in fact it is ridiculous to believe that Bush, Major and the allies want to get rid of Saddam Hussein because he is a brutal butcher: Britain and the US backed him politically even when he was using poison gas on Iraq's own people, and continued to help him build up his military machine. Britain, America and France fed him guns and rockets, and the Germans fed him poison gas plants. He used to be *their* brutal butcher; now he is not *theirs* any longer, and they want to replace him, probably with another brutal butcher.

Even most of those who support war know that the cry "Liberate Kuwait" really means: get back control of Kuwait's oil. "Doing something about" Saddam Hussein is also no more than a convenient popular cry. Britain and America quarrel with their former proteges not because he is a mini-Hitler to the Iraqis, but because he got too ambitious and grabbed what they believed was rightfully theirs — Kuwait's oil.

If they succeed in putting down Saddam Hussein, what will they do then? The people who armed and supported Saddam Hussein

## Defence, defeat and socialists

The French Communist Party," complains the French revolutionary journal *Lutte de Classe*, "condemns Iraq's missile attack on Tel Aviv, as if the fact of being the attacker or the attacked was the most important thing in this war, and as if Israel had not been attacking the Palestinians for years."

In similar vein, a public meeting in London last week saw *SO's* editor John O'Mahony condemned from the floor as someone who would defend Israel "even against those who have a right to attack it".

Israel *does* oppress the Palestinian Arabs. It *has* been attacking them for years. If Palestinians attack Israeli military targets, we're on their side, even if they 'shoot first'. Attacks on Israeli civilian targets are a different matter; but even there we would feel an obligation to qualify condemnation with explanation.

But Iraq, not the Palestinians, attacked Tel Aviv and Haifa. Israel does not oppress Iraq. Israel has not been attacking Iraq "for years".

The thinking of those who justify Iraq's attacks on Israel is apparently

Der Spiegel

throughout the 1980s will most likely build up another — more bidable — Saddam Hussein to defend their interests. They won't care too much about his methods against Iraqis and Kurds. The US and Britain have a long, long record of supporting hideous dictators in the Third World.

Since August, when UN sanctions started, the issues — and the stated or half-stated goals of the US and Britain — have repeatedly

shifted and widened. From sanctions and defence of Saudi Arabia they quickly went to mobilisation for war — "to liberate Kuwait". Now Tom King and others openly talk about destroying the Iraqi regime — which probably means occupying Iraq.

Then what? The whole regime is already destabilised. Millions of people across the Arab states object to their governments' alliances with the US. What will the US do when

Saddam Hussein has been put down, but the whole region is in flames?

They went in for oil. They won't just go and leave the region in turmoil. They are likely to stay as a long-term garrison. It may take many, many years to achieve a political settlement they will accept as satisfactory.

This method of "doing something about Saddam Hussein" means putting the clock back 30 or 40 years and going for the recolonisation by Western imperialism of parts of Arabia.

The only people who can "do something" about Saddam Hussein and achieve a positive, progressive outcome are the peoples of Iraq themselves — the peoples that Britain, France and the US helped Saddam to beat down and control.

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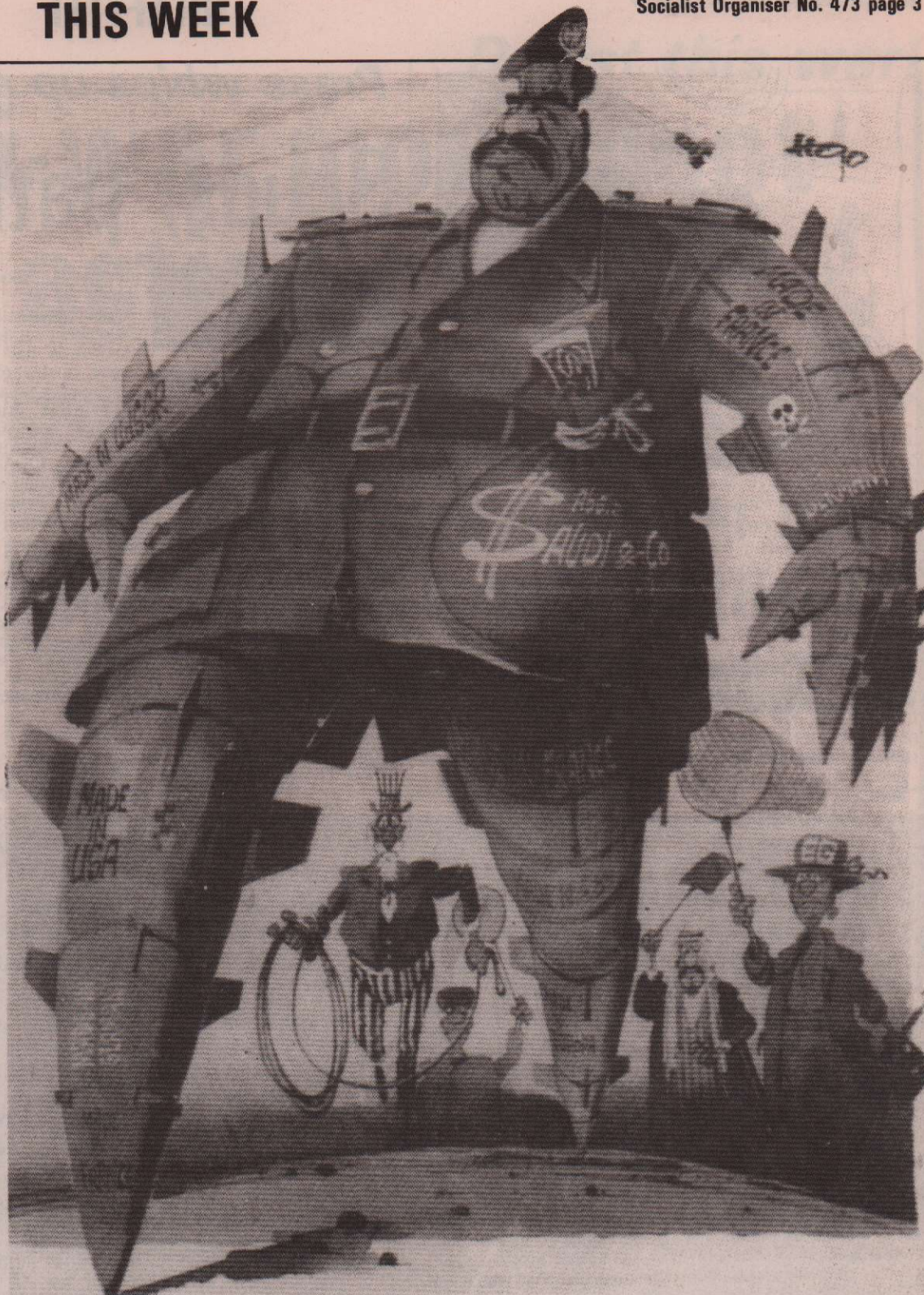
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"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."  
Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA  
Newsdesk: 071 639 7965  
Latest date for reports: Monday

Editor: John O'Mahony  
Published by WL Publications Ltd,  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA  
Printed by Tridant Press, Edenbridge  
Registered as a newspaper at the  
Post Office

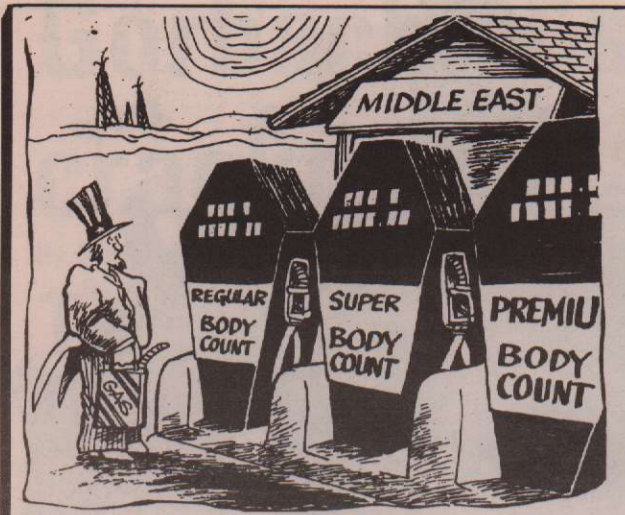
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# GRAFFITI

Press whips up anti-Muslim hysteria

## Scuds, patriots...and racists



## Bush makes war, 20 million starve

### GRAFFITI

Every six hours Britain spends as much on the Gulf war as it spent on African famine relief in the whole year 1990. Every five hours the US spends on the war enough to supply grain for one month to all the 20 million people facing starvation in Africa.

Britain is spending, so the government says, about £3.6 million a day on operating expenses in the Gulf, and an average of £25 million a day so far in lost hardware. Estimates for the total cost of the war to the British government range from £1 billion to £5 billion — depending, of course, on what assumptions you make about how long and destructive the war will be.

In the US, the Federal Reserve has dismissed the estimate of \$2 billion a day which we quoted last week, and even the Pentagon's official estimate of \$1 billion a day. The Fed claims the price is "only" \$300 to \$500 million a day. Estimates for the total cost to the US government range from \$28 billion to \$86 billion.

Although the US's spending is much higher than Britain's, the *Independent on Sunday* (27 January) calculates that *proportionately* — as a percentage of national income — Britain is paying more for the war than the US or any other member of the US-led coalition.

The impression is of a barrage of information pouring back from all key points, but when you think about it carefully you realise that television has offered only the sketchiest idea of what is happening in Iraq or anywhere else" — Christopher Dunkley, TV critic of the *Financial Times*, 23 January.

US blacks oppose the war. According to an opinion poll shortly after the start of war, only 43% of black Americans

supported George Bush's decision to attack Iraq, while 83% of white Americans supported Bush.

Of the 26 blacks in Congress, only one voted for war.

23 per cent of black Americans have relatives in the US forces in the Gulf, but only 7 per cent of whites. Black Americans will pay a big part of the price for the war.

They are 13.5 per cent of the air force people in the Gulf, 17 per cent of the marines, 21 per cent of the navy, and 30 per cent of the force which is likely to take the biggest casualties, the army. In the US population at large they are only 12 per cent.

Politicians give a direct answer to only 40 per cent of questions addressed to them, according to research by Prof. Sandra Harris of Nottingham Polytechnic.

Her findings will come as no surprise to anyone who has followed political leaders' statements on the Gulf.

Prof. Harris (as reported in the *Independent on Sunday*, 27 January) also found that police officers scored scarcely better than MPs. They gave a straight answer to 60 per cent of questions, and evaded 40 per cent.

Members of the public questioned by the police in police stations — at least a proportion of whom must have something to hide — answered straight 80 per cent of the time, and were evasive to only 20 per cent of questions. So what do the cops have to hide?

The average US wage-earner now spends 44 per cent of their income on housing — in the 1950s it was only 14 per cent. No wonder there are hundreds of thousands homeless in the US.

Partly in response to rapidly-rising house costs, some middle-class people in the US (according to the *Economist* magazine) are turning socialist. They are going for "co-housing" — projects where a cluster of houses are built together, with shared cooking and childcare facilities.



By Jim Denham

This has been a difficult war for the press. Out-flanked on every front by TV (and, especially, by the saturation coverage of CNN), the printed media is having to scrape around to find a role for itself.

The obvious answer would be for the press to acknowledge the overwhelming superiority of TV's "news" capability, and concentrate on "background" and "analysis". In practice, most papers have gone for a sort of "Boy's Own" approach: lots of maps with arrows on them and cutaway drawings of exciting weaponry like the Stealth, the AIO and the Challenger.

Predictably, the *Sunday Times* presently leads the "Boy's Own" field with a bumper 16-page full colour "briefing" packed full of maps, diagrams and articles by people like General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley.

For anything vaguely resembling "analysis" (like, what the hell is this war actually about?) you have to seek out those few — very few — journalists who are not completely wrapped up in Scuds, Patriots and MoD briefings.

The *Independent's* Robert Fisk is one of the few. He is not accredited by the MoD and his dispatches from the Gulf tell a very different story from that peddled by most of the MoD mouthpieces who pass for "war correspondents" in the British press: units led by officers without basic road maps, convoys getting lost on the Saudi-Kuwait border and, underlying it all, complete

confusion about the war aims.

On the home front, the *Independent on Sunday's* Neal Ascherson has been asking some awkward questions about war aims: "So far, President Bush's only declared War Aim is the eviction of Iraq from Kuwait... However, I expect there will soon be others...The propaganda weapon we call War Aims is about to be adjusted..."

Surprisingly, the *Sunday Times*' "Boy's Own" supplement hit the nail on the head, almost in passing: "It began as a war to liberate Kuwait. It has become a war to overthrow Saddam Hussein and destroy his military might."

Meanwhile, the *Sun* and the *Star* continue their private war to out-

jingo each other. Both tabloids have appropriated the union jack for their mastheads, the *Star's* overprinted with the words "Go get 'em, lads", while the *Sun* proclaims itself "The paper that backs our boys and girls".

This kind of posturing could, perhaps, be dismissed as simply laughable, were it not for the thinly-disguised anti-Muslim racism that accompanies it.

The *Sun's* latest campaign revolves around their front page of 15 January — a union jack with a squaddie's face in the middle. This none-too-subtle design has since been reproduced by the *Sun*, on posters, T-shirts, and even shopping bags. Not surprisingly, it has caused some bad feeling, especially in multi-racial workplaces.

The *Sun* is now full of stories about patriotic

English men and women being ordered to remove their union jacks by lily-livered bosses worried about giving offence to Muslim workers. A worker at Copal Castings in West Bromwich has apparently been sacked for refusing to take down a *Sun* union jack that he'd taped to a window.

The *Sun* has yet to offer us any editorial comment on these incidents. But contributors to the paper's letters column have clearly got the message: "What the hell is going on in this country when people are forbidden to carry our flag for fear of insulting Muslims?" Another *Sun* reader put it more bluntly: "Those people who don't like the British flag shouldn't hold down British jobs."

Aren't there supposed to be laws in this country against incitement to racial hatred?

## The lie machine

As if none of the Western leaders' relatives have luxury houses...



Isn't war fun when you wage it from a warm, safe, comfortable editorial office thousands of miles from the bombs and bullets.

Freed? The island is uninhabited, and completely under water for half the year. How do you tell a free uninhabited island from an unfree one?



## Football, kittens and "women's jobs"

### WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

Firstly I want to correct something I wrote last year.

It appears that football supporters only become loud and sexist when using public transport. I now live close to the no torious Millwall football ground and all the supporters who walk to the matches are perfectly sane and

normal. In fact they seem like a nice crowd.

A cat who lives in our house is having kittens.

If she were human, Barbara Cartland would suggest that she be given wages in order to give up her job of chasing shadows and 20 hours a day sleep in order to care for her brood.

Ms Cartland, by all accounts, works extremely hard at her writing, so it is perhaps surprising that she is such an advocate of full-time childcare. Mind you she is not the first famous woman worker to do so.

Many of the ills of society are blamed on working mothers, from juvenile delinquency to broken marriages, and thousands of books have been written on both sides of

the question. Working mothers are bombarded with propaganda and guilt.

A healthy society would offer all mothers a choice. The vast majority of working mothers work from economic necessity, and no doubt there are many who would happily "stay at home" if they could be sure of a decent income.

Other mothers would continue working. Yet others would take up work if they could get decent child care. I am also sure that there are plenty of fathers who would gladly care for the children if the mother's income would support them all.

One problem is that women are seen as potential mothers by employers (and by themselves). They don't get the jobs which would keep a whole family. The labour movement has a tradition of fighting for the (male) "family wage". Traditional "women's jobs" attract low

pay and the poorest conditions and security, partly because the woman's job is seen as being for a "second income" or as a short-term thing before childbearing.

Even when maternity conditions are quite good (usually in the public sector), they are inflexible, and the woman is expected to return to work effortlessly after the baby is born and not worry anyone with her additional needs.

The anti-working-mother propaganda is one way of side-stepping these issues. As long as mothers are made to feel guilty about working they will not organise to fight for better conditions.

The role of working mothers is not just a matter of economics, but equally of ideology. It is impossible to deal with one without the other. While decent childcare is perceived as a "privilege", we've got a long way to go. Anyone want a kitten?

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Socialist Organiser is the only paper on the left with the clear, unambiguous message: Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

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## Resist this war!

# Student anti-war movement calls day of action



Eddie Goncalves (Student CND) and Steph Ward (South Yorkshire Area NUS Convenor)

By Steph Ward, Convenor, South Yorkshire Area NUS

Young people will pay for this war — many of them with their lives. So young people are beginning to organise to stop the war.

300 students from 70 colleges attended the 'Students Against the Gulf War' conference organised by South Yorkshire Area NUS last week (23 January).

The conference brought together Labour Clubs, student unions and anti-war groups to co-ordinate the growing

resistance to the Western offensive and decided to set up a 'Student Federation Against Gulf War' to tie the areas together and co-ordinate local work.

The conference heard speakers from Student CND, NUS National Executive, an Iraqi lecturer, Bradford Peace Studies Department, and Sheffield University AUT. Workshops included the history of the Vietnam war, military research on campuses, racism and deportation, and welfare not warfare.

Motions passed included sup-

port for the day of action jointly called by NUS and Student CND on 30 January. Resolutions committed those present to organise teach-ins, direct actions and to begin to build an anti-conscription campaign.

The main issues of dispute at the conference were the Israeli-Palestinian question, and our attitude to Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. An SWPer moved a motion which failed to condemn the bombing of Tel Aviv and Haifa. The motion's movers called for the destruction of Israel. This was defeated in favour of a position calling

for the removal of troops from the West Bank and Gaza.

Delegates also voted in favour of an immediate Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and Western troops out of the Gulf. These motions were passed as conference policy, but are not the basis of the agitational campaign now being launched.

The SWP reached new heights of hysterical behaviour, repeatedly disrupting the plenary sessions.

The event was a huge success and hopefully will lay the basis for a non-sectarian, campaigning anti-war student movement.

## Stop the round-up!

Round 'em all up" said Winston Churchill in 1939 as thousands of people of Italian and German origin were sent to prison camps. They were mainly poor migrants with little interest in the war. A lot of them were political refugees, including German Jews.

The Gulf war has triggered another spate of round-'em-up-and-ship-'em-out British chauvinism. Around 80 Iraqis have already been deported and another 87, including 12 Palestinians are in prison. The Red Cross has complained about the bad conditions where they are being kept, in a disused wing of Pentonville Prison. They are forced to wear 'patches', brightly coloured patchwork clothes to ease detection should they escape. These conditions are considerably worse than the Baghdad hotels British citizens were held in.

35 are held as prisoners of war because they are believed to have links with the Iraqi army. The rest may be deported as threats to 'national security'.

Ali el-Saleh has lived in Britain for 21 years and is marketing director of a company which has refused to handle any Iraqi work and helped set up Radio Free Kuwait. He was president of the General Union of Palestinian Students from 1971-75. He is in jail.

Iman el-Saleh, his wife, was also threatened with deportation until she pointed out that her two children are British citizens. What is Ali's crime? No-one knows.

Another internee is Abbas Cheblak, an information officer with the Arab League, and ex-



Iraqi oppositionists demonstrate before the war, whilst the Tories still backed Saddam



Army PoW camp, Salisbury Plain

ecutive member of the Arab Human Rights Campaign, and a signatory to a published letter condemning the invasion of Kuwait. He has lived in Britain for 16 years!

These are only two examples of Arabs who have little to do with Iraq, and are opposed to Saddam's dictatorship. If these, and people like them, are deported to Jordan, their lives will be in grave danger; if they end up in Iraq they will face certain death.

The internments and deportations are being carried out under the 1971 Immigration Act, which allows the Home Secretary to expel people as a threat to national security. The Home Secretary will issue deportation orders based on reports from Special Branch and MI5. The victim has no right to see the evidence, nor to know which terrorist organisation they are supposedly linked to!

There is a right of appeal to 'three wise men' — three elderly judges and civil servants with a background in the intelligence service. They are Lord Justice Lloyd, who has worked closely with MI5 and MI6 for years; Sir Robert Andrew, a former intelligence officer who went on to the Home Office to work on deportations; and David Neve, who started his career as a judge in Uganda when it was a British colony.

The victim must offer a defence without use of a lawyer and without knowledge of the charges! The 'wise men' then write a recommendation to the Home Secretary, which he doesn't have to follow anyway.

Make the Tories pay, not the patients or workers!

## The NHS can't cope

By Mary Williams, NUPE, District Nurse, South Wales

All over South Wales health workers are anticipating the effects of the Gulf war.

At the moment the atmosphere is one of cheerful curiosity, we cope with anything that comes our way and there is little sense of the effect that war casualties will have on the NHS, though graphic descriptions of shrapnel wounds are starting to worry some of us.

One large psychiatric hospital in mid-Glamorgan is reported to be preparing to admit up to 800 beds for victims of shell-shock, 'luckily' vacant due the wholesale shunting off of patients back into the community. The fact that the Welsh regiments alone expect at least 800 psychiatric cases gives us some indication of the scale of the carnage that is looming.

All over South Wales the District General Hospitals are preparing wards for casualties. This indicates that managers want to dilute the workload, avoiding concentrations

at any one place.

In Cardiff St David's Hospital is re-opening 20 beds. St David's is an old workhouse converted into a notoriously under-staffed and under-funded geriatric hospital. No doubt this will take the overflow from the acute hospitals.

Meanwhile, an empty ward in Cardiff Royal Infirmary will be used for casualties. Staff have been informed that they will be re-deployed into areas of need — but where the extra staff to cope with the crisis will come from we don't know.

At the moment night staffing levels are already dangerously low. There is just not enough slack to cope with extra demand.

Some nurses have been informed that they will be required to move to acute areas — in other words, out-patient nurses will be sent back to the wards. Overtime will almost certainly be required.

Today [28 January], some 200 nurses attended lectures given by a military surgeon who described the kind of appalling casualties they would be expected to attend to. Nurses may even be expected to take on medical roles.

We must ensure that the wards are properly staffed at all times.

All overtime is paid for, not given as time back at some unspecified date.

Extra staff must be employed on permanent contracts so that the NHS can cope with the needs of acutely ill soldiers, and also their long-term rehabilitation.

Nurses must be regraded if they are being expected to carry out extra duties.

Pay beds must be thrown open to use by the NHS.

We must not let ourselves get into the situation we faced during World War 2, whereby an awful lot of nurses gained qualifications by bypassing the normal routes thus downgrading other properly qualified nurses.

During a crisis like this healthworkers are expected to be flexible and make compromises, but we shouldn't compromise our standards of care. At the moment we are all waiting — lulled into a false sense of security by the low casualty rates of British troops.

Cardiff healthworkers are meeting to work out a response to the war and its implications for the NHS in Wales. Please contact Keith Evans, c/o Cardiff Campaign Against War in the Gulf, 0222 228702 or 0222 623927.

## Resist this war!

# The Gulf war: the environmental threat

By Les Hearn

On the basis of relative firepower, Iraqi forces are likely to be expelled from Kuwait. However, as an assortment of Labour MPs, the Green Party, environmental campaigners and King Hussein of Jordan have pointed out, Saddam has another sort of firepower up his sleeve.

If his forces were to fire the oilfields as they left Kuwait, not only a few oil billionaires would suffer. Massive amounts of soot, carbon dioxide and other pollutants would pour into the air for weeks, if not months. And it is widely accepted that Iraq has mined the oil wells.

That much seems certain, but it is the effects of this military vandalism that are in question. At the World Climate Conference last November, King Hussein raised the possibility of increased acid rain, accelerated global warming and a form of 'nuclear winter'.

Similar, though less drastic, claims were made at a conference in London a week before the outbreak of war. This was organised by CND and the Green Party, and introduced by Abdullah Toukan, Jordan's chief scientific adviser. The keynote contribution to the meeting was a paper delivered by leading CND member John Cox, a chemical engineer by profession.

In it, Cox estimates that Kuwait's oilwells could burn some 3 million barrels of oil a day, comparable to the output of the wells before the invasion. The fires would continue until all Kuwait's reserves had been burnt (about 10% of the world's reserves) or until the fires were extinguished. This is because the oil is under pressure and would naturally flow to the surface, feeding the flames.

This would, according to Cox, add less than 5% to the global output of CO<sub>2</sub>. Thus, those who think the fires would accelerate the greenhouse effect are barking up the wrong tree. "In reality," says Cox, "the main dangers arise from the major by-products of uncontrolled combustion — carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and, above all, smoke."

The latter he estimates at 500,000 tonnes a month and most experts agree it would take several months, perhaps even a year, to put all the

oilwell fires out.

Now, smoke is composed largely of tiny particles of carbon (soot) which, being black, are very good at absorbing heat. A cloud of it would absorb the Sun's heat and re-radiate it in all directions. The result would be less heat and light reaching the ground and therefore reduced temperatures.

Such an effect has been observed in the case of massive volcanic eruptions which have put fine dust particles into the stratosphere. Soot particles would have a greater effect than dust. That is the science of smoke.

The questions remaining are how much smoke will be produced,

**"The smoke of oilfield fires would certainly be enough to affect the climate of the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent."**

where will it go and how long will it last. There is, of course, some disagreement between experts but all agree that the amount is unlikely to affect the climate of the world. At worst, the total quantity of smoke would be a few per cent of the total dust raised by a full-scale nuclear war.

Comment such as that Gulf fires will cause 'ecological catastrophe for all mankind' are therefore unjustified. Indeed, they allow others to dismiss all warnings of damage and danger as scaremongering.

The smoke would certainly be enough to affect the climate of the Middle East and, because of prevailing wind patterns, the Indian sub-continent.

Latest predictions for 'nuclear winter' theories suggest falls in temperatures of 10 to 20C. But even a small fall in surface temperatures over the Indian sub-continent would have serious consequences for the formation of the summer monsoon. The rain-bearing monsoon winds sweep in from the sea as a result of convection currents above the hot land. They are effectively colossal sea breezes.

Any reduction of land temperatures would lessen the force of the monsoon winds so that less rain would be brought. The agriculture that sustains a billion people could be devastated. At the very least, the resulting deaths from

famine would dwarf the direct casualties of the war.

Few scientists consulted on this theory disagree violently with its conclusions. Debate centres on such questions as whether the heat of the fires would push smoke high into the atmosphere where it would last longer or on how much smoke would be produced by fires in which there was a lack of oxygen.

This didn't deter Energy Secretary John Wakeham stating that "suggestions of a global environmental disaster are totally misplaced." However, further on in his statement, Wakeham agrees with Cox (the object of "anti-communist" witch-hunts on CND by the Tories in the mid-'80s) on the rate of burning of Kuwaiti oil. And a Met Office report released a week or so ago agrees with Cox in all important details.

There are precedents for the sort of scenario predicted by Cox. Volcanic eruptions in Rakata (Krakatoa) in 1883 and in Iceland in 1783 are said to have significantly reduced the intensity of sunlight in France, a considerable distance away from the explosions, and to have been followed by an unusually severe winter in much of the world. And in 1915 major forest fires in Siberia generated some 30 million tonnes of smoke, leading to a drop



The TV has shown hundreds of feet of film of cormorants — with hardly a word about the human casualties in Iraq of the biggest blitzkrieg in history

in temperature of 2 to 5C in much of Siberia.

The lack of rain in the Gulf region and the intense heat of oil fires may combine to produce long-

lasting clouds of smoke, high up in the atmosphere where they may be blown large distances. Conditions seem ripe for perhaps the greatest man-made disaster of all time.

## US anti-war activities escalate

Barry Finger reports from New York

If the opinion polls belong to the US administration, the streets belong to the anti-war movement.

Once again, this past Saturday (26 January), hundreds of thousands marched, on both coasts, to protest against the Gulf war.

Sensitive to the criticism that the Vietnam anti-war movement 'betrayed' the soldiers, speaker after speaker asserted that the best way to show concern for the troops is to demand their return home and immediate withdrawal from an engagement which is not in the nation's interest.

Expectations that the division in the anti-war movement might harm this week's events proved unfounded. If anything, this week's event, organised by the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East was even more successful than that held a week ago.

The division between the Campaign and the Coalition to Stop Western Intervention in the Middle East — sponsors of last week's demonstration — originated in the refusal of the latter to specifically condemn Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. The Coalition is dominated by the Stalinist Workers World Party.

Campaign activists, on the other hand, as well as most of the US left who have lined up behind the Campaign, oppose all regional occupations and interventions.

Clearly the mainstream of the anti-war movement have no sympathy for Saddam Hussein and debates within the left still have little resonance within the broader movement.

A realistic appraisal of the broader anti-war forces suggests that the battle for public opinion is taking place on a totally different — almost nationalistic — terrain. What is questioned on Main Street is whether loss of American life is justified in defence of oil.

Although nearly three-quarters of Americans see themselves as sup-

porters of the war, a poll last Saturday indicates that only 32% support a ground war.

The leaders of nine US unions announced on 10 January that they opposed the abandonment of sanctions for outright war. Among the signatories were the Presidents of the Auto Workers, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, and Com-

munication Workers. The AFL-CIO will not take a formal position on the war until next month. It is expected that it will tilt in a pro-war direction.

While this is not a clear-cut anti-war position it does represent a significant crack in the normally solid upper echelons of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy.

### Backlash in US trade unions

**"There's a backlash against the anti-war movement within the US trade unions right now."**

"Union locals [branches] and executives have been rescinding anti-war motions and supporting Bush", reports Phil Kwik from Detroit.

Behind the scenes, Lane Kirkland, head of the AFL-CIO (US TUC), has been pulling into line some of the trade union

leaders who signed a "let sanctions work" appeal on the eve of war.

Nevertheless, after 200,000 demonstrated in Washington DC on 26 January, the anti-war trade union left can expect to regain ground quickly. The number of trade union banners on the 100,000 strong West Coast demonstration suggests that labour support for the anti-war cause is already much higher than it was during the comparable stage of the Vietnam war.



Casualties of US terror in Vietnam...and how many like that are there already in Iraq?

## Doubling sales

Double the usual number this week, reports a Sheffield supporter on his SO sales.

Sales on the anti-war demonstration last Saturday, in his college Labour Club, and at his Labour Party GC made up the total.

People selling on the demonstrations report that sales are best at the end of the protest, as marchers are dispersing and perhaps looking for more reports and ideas to inform their future activity. When demonstrators are assembling, making their way past rows of paper sellers to find their contingent, is an important time for sales, too, but often not as productive.

This week we're writing to some dozens of people who have been associated with the paper in the past but have become inactive, or less active, for one reason or another. We're asking them to reconsider in light of the war.

The mass media are pouring out war propaganda at a rate, and with a virulence, not seen in Britain for decades. Papers like *Socialist Organiser* are almost the only counterweight — almost the only breach in the wall of lies. Anyone who

cares about truth and democracy, let alone socialism and internationalism, should help us get the message out!

## Keep up the fund drive!

Anti-war activity is taking up the time of most SO readers, but it's important that fund-raising doesn't lose out.

We need the money in order to be able to continue to get the anti-war message out, in the pages of *SO*, in leaflets, and through sending speakers to meetings.

Please send donations to *SO*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Forms to make a regular contribution through our '200 Club' can be got from the same address.

## Resist this war!

# Israel's anti-war minority fights against the odds

By Adam Keller

There are a few hopeful signs. The Palestinian Arab Mayor's Committee and some Arab villages have offered to house Israeli Jews who have been made homeless by missile attacks.

Not many Jews would accept such an invitation, but there are reports today of three families who have done so.

But generally the situation is bad. The Palestinians are now under a very tight curfew. They have no opportunity to demonstrate.

The only thing that continues is the killing of collaborators. This is done by small groups at night.

When the alarms go in Israel the Arabs just over the border go onto the roofs and cheer "long live Saddam Hussein".

I can understand both the Israeli peace activists who now support the war and the Palestinians who support Saddam Hussein — but I don't agree with either.

Except for a few individuals the whole of the Zionist left is now supporting the war.

Today [28 June], a statement was produced by well-known Israeli peace movement figures supporting the war. It says that the war has been caused by Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. The attacks against Israel were an attempt to broaden the war into a Holy War and any peace movement which avoids recognising these facts plays into the hands of the aggressor, Iraq.

Those who look for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through recognition of Palestinian rights and self-determination should not believe that a peaceful solution can possibly come about as part of an attempt to satisfy an aggressor who has no interest in peace.

The elimination of the genocidal Iraqi regime is an essential condition for peace in the Middle East, and so world peace movements should side with those fighting Iraq.

I do not agree with these sentiments, although I can understand them. Israel is being directly attacked, and Saddam Hussein is all the things that they say about him. But we can't support the US.

Unfortunately, some in the Israeli peace movement have long hoped that Israel will be forced out of the West Bank and Gaza by the



## Tel Aviv under the missiles

By Adam Keller

Tel Aviv, 28 January

There has just been an air raid alarm in Tel Aviv.

It is a tense time. What is coming — conventional explosive or gas?

The best defence against gas is to close yourself in a sealed room with a gas mask. The best defence against explosive is the air-raid shelter.

To stay in your room exposes you to conventional explosive.

To go to the air-raid shelter makes you vulnerable to gas. The government tells us to stay in our sealed rooms and that the gas is more dangerous.

We are compromising. We live on the fourth floor, facing North (the direction the missiles come from). We sit in the staircase, the most solid part of the building. After five to ten minutes, the time it takes for the missile to get from Iraq to Israel, we move to our sealed room to

provide the best defence against gas.

I remain opposed both to the American war and to Saddam Hussein. Saddam has a bunker which has a swimming pool and French furniture. It cost a hundred million dollars and could withstand an atomic blast.

Saddam's people are exposed to the Americans and we are exposed to Iraqi missiles. This war is terrible. Bush and Saddam are both wrong.

US. This is not exactly the right preparation for mobilising against the policy of the US.

The anti-war initiative of the professors at Tel Aviv University suffered a big backlash against it. Quite a number of the left-wing lecturers are now in favour of the war.

Before the war there was a split in Peace Now. The radicals in the movement opposed war. But now there is no split; they all support the war. There are now splits in the more radical groups — some of their members now support the war.

The anti-war forces now consist of the anti-Zionist left, those who have any type of anti-

imperialist ideas, the pro-Moscow Communist Party, the Trotskyists, and the pacifists.

The Communist Party managed to bring out an emergency copy of their paper during the first week of the war, when Israel came to a standstill. It contained useful information about the Palestinians, but covered for Gorbachev's actions in Lithuania.

There is a political question to be solved among the anti-war people. Some want to direct all our demands against America, some want to demand Iraq gets out of Kuwait. My view is that Saddam must be condemned and we must demand Saddam withdraws from Kuwait. I think the people who do not like the demands against Iraq

must accept them, for unity.

I am trying not to burn all bridges with the left Zionists. I remember the Lebanon war. At the start of that war the people against the war were very isolated.

Unfortunately the situation now is forgotten Lebanon and 1982. We are now witnessing the natural reaction of a people under attack. The people are closing ranks and rallying around the government.

I think we are also seeing this reaction in Iraq. The Americans believe that the bombing will lead to the overthrow of Saddam. I suspect that people, in fact, are rallying to their government.

Lots of people are leaving Tel Aviv, and many are going to Jerusalem. They believe that Jerusalem will not be attacked because it has a large Arab population and holy shrines. People with more money are going to Eilat, which they expect to be safe because it is so near Aquaba in Jordan.

The mayor of Tel Aviv has caused a stir by calling those who are leaving Tel Aviv "traitors". This has caused a lot of resentment.

Only a few people on the far right are in favour of retaliation. They are isolated.

There is a dispute over wages for workers who stayed home during the first few days of war because the government told people to stay at home.

Legally, no one has to pay their salaries. There was a lot of anger — including from the Zionist left and the Histadrut.

Yesterday [27 January] the government stated their employers could not fire workers who stayed away from work because of the emergency. But the payment for these few days has been left to negotiations between the Histadrut and the employers.

## Quarter of a million march in Germany

250,000 marched to 'Stop the War' in Bonn on Saturday 26 January.

It was Germany's biggest demonstration — outside those that brought down Stalinism in East Germany — since the protests against nuclear weapons in the early '80s. The DGB (German TUC) supported the march, and about 15 per cent of the demonstrators were in trade union contingents.

On the same day 40,000 marched in Berlin, and there was also a demonstration in Bremerhaven, a port from which military shipments are going to the Gulf.

But, according to the staff at the Cologne fortnightly *Sozialistische Zeitung*, there are signs of a pro-war backlash in the factories.

School students made up a large part of the demonstrations, as they have of the whole anti-war movement. Speakers at the Bonn demonstration included a bishop, a leader of the DGB, and Israeli civil rights lawyer Felicia Langer. Many demonstrators were at pains to insist that they were not anti-American or anti-Israeli.

## French police declare war on two fronts

40 to 50,000 demonstrators marched in Paris for 'Troops Out of the Gulf!' on Saturday 26 January.

There were also demonstrations in other major cities around France on the same day. They were smaller than those on 12 January, just before the war started, but still sizeable.

The French government has stepped up deportations of Arabs living in France, and is increasing police activity in France under an emergency-powers plan called 'Vigipirate'.

According to one local police chief, quoted in the Paris daily *Le Monde*, "There are two fronts, the one in the Gulf, and ours on French territory." Police checks on people's identity papers — a major routine form of harassment of Arabs and Africans in France even in normal times — have been increased 500 per cent. The police have seized audio cassettes with songs supporting Saddam Hussein on the grounds that they "insult the President of the (French) Republic".

'Vigipirate' allows for the army to be brought in to police cities by simple decision of the Prime Minister.

Alongside the 'Appeal of the 75' which called the demonstration on 26 January (mainly based on the Communist Party, the CGT, the revolutionary left and the Greens), a new anti-war initiative has been launched called 'Peace Now'. Its prime movers are Harlem Desir and other leaders of the anti-racist movement SOS Racisme, which is close to the ruling Socialist Party. Other leaders of SOS Racisme are backing the war.

(Thanks to Rouge)

## In our gas masks we demand 'No blood for oil'

By Adam Keller

With gas masks strapped to their shoulders — the normal precaution taken these days by Israelis who leave their homes — several dozen Israeli peace activists gathered opposite the US Embassy in Tel-Aviv, where they held a vigil protesting against the Gulf war.

This was the first such manifestation since the outbreak of hostilities. The slogans on their placards — in Hebrew, Arabic and English — included: "End the War!"; "Enough with the Missiles. Enough with the Bombardments!"; "No to Saddam, No to Bush, No to War!"; "Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait; we Israelis — from the Occupied Territories!"; "Internation-

ational Peace Conference Now!"; "Immediate Ceasefire!"; "Immediate Negotiations!"; "The Patriot can save our skins — only peace can give us a future!"; "No to Israeli intervention!"; "No Blood for Oil!"; "Security = Peace!" and "We don't want to be your victims!"

The demonstration initially encountered opposition from police who claimed that the emergency situation makes all public gatherings forbidden. The demonstrators requested the help of Adv. Dan Yakir, of the Israeli Civil Rights Association. Knesset Member Tamar Gozanski — who participated in the demonstration — called by telephone a senior police official who confirmed there was no change in the legal situation or a suspension of basic democratic rights.

The demonstrators dispersed in the afternoon, in time to gain the safety of their homes before the evening attack on the city by several Iraqi missiles.

The organisers of the demonstration sent a message of support and solidarity to the coalition of American peace organisations, due to hold a demonstration in Washington on Saturday 26.

"For us who live under the constant threat of the Iraqi missiles, the end of this mad war is not only a matter of political principle, but a matter of physical survival as well. We wish you success in your anti-war struggle, which we regard as our own."

We hope to make these pickets a weekly event; we are circulating a petition to oppose both America and Iraq.

# The Tory war on the rank and file

By Steve Gibbons

The Employment Act 1990 came into force on 1 January 1991 and continues the government's wholesale assault on the diminishing legal rights of trade unionists.

The measures in the Act which are aimed at taming unofficial action should be carefully considered by all socialists, as they constitute a singular attempt to restrict the activities of rank and file members. They also seek to drive a wedge between those members and the union hierarchy.

The 1990 Act contains a number of provisions, including: the new right not to be refused employment on grounds of union or non-union membership; amendments in the law relating to union ballots; extension of the powers of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members; and the removal of immunity for all remaining forms of lawful secondary action, except those which arise during the course of lawful picketing. This article specifically considers the new law aimed at regulating unofficial action.

The pressure to legislate on unofficial action came from, amongst other things, the success of the unofficial strikes on London Underground in 1989. The sudden decision to change the law as a result of these strikes well illustrates the Thatcher government's 'shoot-anything-that-moves' approach to industrial relations law, as unofficial strikes had been considered to

## The meaning of the Employment Act 1990

be 'not a significant problem' in early 1989. The firm display of rank and file strength by the tube workers and others in the summer of 1989 cannot have pleased a government which had long said that the 'evil' of trade unionism lay in the leadership, not the members. This Act will force unions to effectively police their members if they are to remain within the law.

The 1990 Act makes unions liable for acts of shop stewards and any member of strike co-ordinating groups of which the steward is a member, unless the action is effectively repudiated by the union. To follow this up, once an act has been repudiated by a union — or where none of those taking action are union members — any of those involved in the industrial action may be selectively dismissed, with industrial tribunals having no jurisdiction whatsoever to hear any unfair dismissal claims. To cap it all, any otherwise lawful action which follows, will be unlawful if it relates in any way to the dismissal of those taking unofficial industrial action. Soon any action to those victimised under the new laws will be unlawful.

A union will now have been taken to have authorised or endorsed acts taken by the following: 'any person empowered by the rules to do, authorise or endorse acts of the kind in question; the principal executive committee or the president or general secretary; by any other committee of the union or any other official of the union (whether employed by it or not).'

The final part of this new definition is clearly intended to cover the acts of shop stewards but the Act goes further still. It is provided that 'any group of persons constituted in accordance with the rules of the union is a committee of the union' and 'an act shall be taken to have been done, authorised or endorsed by an official if it was done, authorised or endorsed by, or any member of, any group of persons of which [they were] at the material time a member, the purposes of which included organising or co-ordinating industrial action.'

This means that, where a steward is a member of a strike committee — which may or may not be authorised to call action by the union's rules or policy — and any member of that committee calls action, the union will be liable for that action, unless the union repudiates it within the terms of the Act. This potentially takes the law further than it has ever been before, even further than the notorious Taff Vale decision in 1901.

### Making the union liable

The legal steps which a union will have to take if it is to 'repudiate' action are ridiculous. In brief, in order to effectively repudiate any action which it is taken to have authorised or endorsed, the union must write to the official or committee without delay, and 'do its best' to give written notice of the fact and date of repudiation to every member who the union has reason to believe is taking part or might take part in industrial action as a result of the call and to the employer of every such member.

The practical and political implications of these provisions are worth some thought. Unions will now be forced to immediately repudiate industrial action called by any member of a group of people who are involved in organising industrial action, where a lay official is a member of that group. If they do not repudiate it, the union will be liable for that action, which will be automatically unlawful unless a



Oilworkers on unofficial strike for union recognition. Photo: 'Blow Out'

ballot has been conducted in accordance with the stringencies of the 1984 Trade Union Act. If there has not been a ballot, the union will have to repudiate the action and then ballot.

This situation is compounded by s.7 of the Act which provides that a ballot shall not be valid if a union has 'authorised or endorsed' action — in accordance with the provisions set out above — prior to the date of the ballot. The only option for a union who wishes to support unofficial action lawfully is to tell all members in writing that they are repudiating the action, then ballot for fresh action.

It is not difficult to imagine employers arguing before the High Court in these circumstances that 'the union could not have effectively repudiated the action, when they immediately balloted to support what is effectively the same action'. It is also not hard to imagine the courts — with their far from sympathetic record on matters involving the labour movement — upholding this argument and making it impossible for a union to lawfully support a strike which began unofficially.

The process of repudiation, apart from being time-consuming, costly and likely to lead to mischievous legal arguments from employers, clearly has substantial ramifications for the role of the union and the way the members will view the union. The union will effectively have to police its own members, being forced to disown each and every unofficial strike if it is to steer clear of the law courts.

The automatic repudiation of unofficial action will often understandably be viewed with dismay and contempt by those who have taken action to protect their genuine interests. It is also likely that a number of unions, who now

pride themselves on acting within the government's employment laws, will not put up too much of a fight to avoid giving the impression that they are selling their members down the river. After all, they are required to do so by law!

### No defence against the sack

The whole matter is made much worse by a further provision that states that the written notice of repudiation to members, if it is to be legally effective, must contain the following statement:

'Your union has repudiated the call (or calls) for industrial action to which this notice relates and will give no support to unofficial industrial action taken in response to it (or them). If you are dismissed while taking unofficial industrial action, you will have no right to complain of unfair dismissal.'

If unions are to follow the legal requirements, they will often appear to be in breach of fundamental principles of trade unionism. To always immediately repudiate all unofficial action, even if it is explained as a measure rendered necessary by the law, will give many activists and members generally the feeling that they have been somewhat let-down by the union.

It is also possible that additional comment by the union on the notice of repudiation, which is aimed at communicating to their members that they 'don't really mean it' or were forced by law to repudiate and put the required wording on the notice, could be interpreted by a court as making the repudiation ineffective in legal terms. The courts have only been too happy in the past, for example during the miners' and seafarers' disputes, to hold unions responsible where they

## Socialists and the trade unions

A Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty weekend school

Saturday and Sunday 9 and 10 February  
Mandela Building, Manchester Polytechnic  
Starts 11.30am Saturday

Guest speakers include: Ronnie MacDonald (Chair, OILC), Ray Carrick (Rank and file ambulance strike leader)

Sessions include: The Gulf war and the unions • The state of the movement today • How to beat the anti-union laws • Debate: industrial action in the public services — the case for and against emergency cover • Fighting for a European women's charter • Arguing socialism in the workplace • Strike strategy: how to fight, how to win • What do we mean by a rank and file movement • Dockers: the rise and fall of the NDLB • Workplace bulletins: what they are, why we produce them • Sexual harassment at work: how to fight it • Lessons of the ambulance dispute

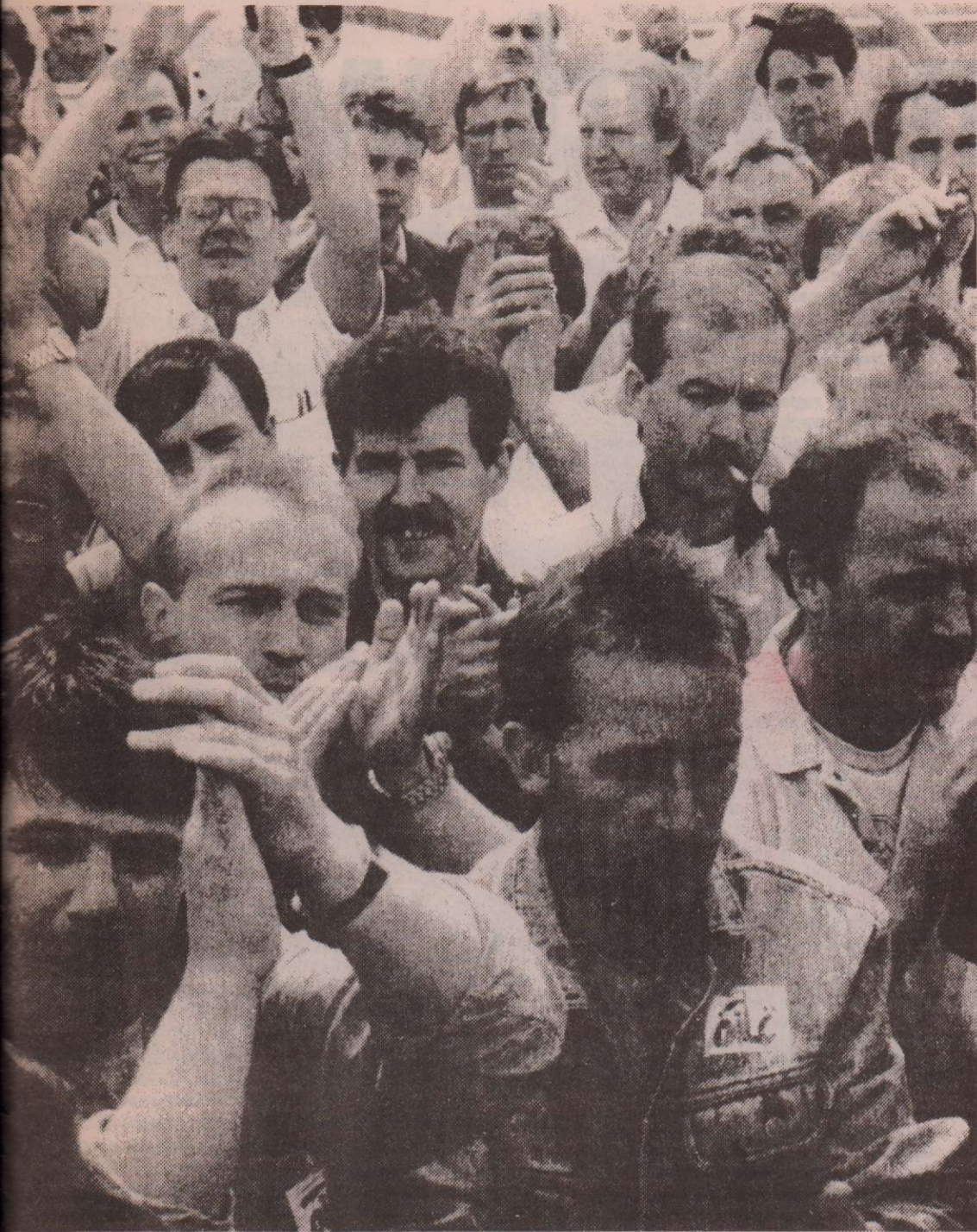
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have given a 'nod and a wink' to action they have officially disowned.

It is also worth noting a provision in the Act which seeks to prevent rank and file members using a vote in favour of industrial action to call action. In order for an industrial action ballot to be valid and give the union legal protection, the ballot paper must now specify who is authorised to call any action. If any person, other than those named on the ballot paper, calls any action, that action will be unlawful. Therefore, if there is a vote in favour of a strike and those named on the ballot paper, for example the general secretary and regional organiser, decide that industrial action is not appropriate, any action called by stewards who feel that the action should go ahead would be automatically unlawful.

This provision clearly restricts the scope for independent action by

**"The pressure to legislate on unofficial action came from, amongst other things, the success of the strike on London Underground in 1989."**

stewards and activists and further places the union in the role of policing their members. Where a ballot has shown a majority in favour of action, but the union hierarchy decide that they do not want a strike, then stewards cannot legally enforce the democratic views of the

members by calling action if they are not named on the ballot paper.

### Civil liberties implications

Alongside the political ramifications which stem from the law forcing unions to repudiate unofficial action, there are serious legal consequences for individuals, which constitute a further serious infringement on civil liberties. The Act provides that, after the end of the working day the repudiation has taken place, individuals who continue to take action — and this is any form of industrial action, not just strikes — may be selectively dismissed and have no right to bring unfair dismissal claims.

The powers of victimisation given to employers are incompatible with any system of civilised employment rights. The employer could simply use, or provoke, an incidence unofficial action to rid themselves of individuals they did not like or held a grudge against and, of course, those employees who were active trade unionists.

The new law goes one step further in placing unions and their members in impossible situations when unofficial action is taking place. Where an employer has dismissed unofficial strikers any action that is in any way related to their victimisation will be unlawful.

To take an example of the new provisions in operation. Unofficial action is called over a pay dispute. The union wishes to support this action, so repudiates it and ballots their members. Some members continue the action while balloting takes place. These individuals are dismissed two days after the repudiation and, consequently, have no right to claim unfair

dismissal. If the employer can then show that one of the reasons for the action is support of those victimised workers — which potentially would not be difficult, as hopefully most unions would come to the support of such workers, either expressly or impliedly — the union may be liable to be enjoined, with all the consequences that stem from that.

The law which now relates to unofficial action is clearly restrictive in the extreme. It is certainly possible to envisage many circumstances where unions, if they are to remain true to their members and principles, would have no option but to defy the law. The fact that the majority of unofficial strikes are short-lived affairs which simply 'let off steam', will surely make unions hesitant to follow the impracticable step of repudiating each incidence of unofficial action which comes to their notice. This is over and above the political considerations that arise when a union repudiates action.

This Act could potentially provide the spark which finally brings about mass defiance of Conservative employment legislation and a campaign to demonstrate to the public how the provisions of all the 1980s legislation, and the 1990 Act in particular, amount to a serious attack on the labour movement and working people in general and their right to defend themselves against abuses of power by employers. Unfortunately, there are many factors which suggest that support for such a campaign would be unlikely to come from many senior figures in the trade union movement.

• Steve Gibbons is a member of the Employment Law Committee of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. This article is an abridged version of one which will appear in the Spring 1991 issue of *Socialist Lawyer*.

## Our history

# Liebknecht and Luxemburg

By Vicki Morris

New Year in Germany 72 years ago was not a joyous festival. The workers shot on the orders of the authorities on Christmas eve had only just been buried when a new campaign of anti-working class incitement and murder was under way.

The 'authorities' were the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Until it collapsed into chauvinism into 1914 this party had been the world's leading 'Marxist' and socialist organisation. But the party of 'peace' had supported the war in 1914 and was now the party of 'law and order' which ordered the brutal crushing of the rising workers' movement.

At the head of the 'socialist' government were Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann. Ebert had become Chancellor when the Imperial government collapsed in November 1918.

On November 10th, the Workers' and Soldiers' Council of Berlin, the only real power in the capital, appointed him head of the government. Ebert left their meeting and within hours was secretly conspiring with the mad-dog militarists on how to crush the Berlin workers.

"I hate revolution like mortal sin," he had assured the Kaiser. He furiously attacked Scheidemann for declaring that Germany was a republic.

Scheidemann was not very different. Later he completely defended the murder of the revolutionary leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Using his son-in-law — who had offered a reward of 10,000 marks for anyone who would assassinate Liebknecht and Luxemburg — he was at the heart of the most reactionary conspiracy.

The third top SPD leader, Noske, boasted, on being appointed commander in chief of the German troops: "Someone has to be the bloodhound, and I will not shirk my responsibility". He personally directed the final ferocious assaults on the working class districts.

In Berlin their chief accomplice was Otto Wels, the social democratic Commandant of the capital. Wels was the founder of the 15,000-strong Republican Soldiers' Defence Corps, a counter-revolutionary shock troop directly financed by capitalist groups.

Having failed to crush the workers at Christmas, Ebert, Noske and the military commanders launched another wave of terror in early 1919. From the newspapers loyal to

the government, including the SPD's *Vorwärts*, came the first blasts of the new campaign. They demanded the sacking of the leftist Police Chief of Berlin, who had organised a workers' defence force.

The social-democratic government 'obediently' sacked him, replacing him with another social-democrat who within two years was to be a fervent supporter of the infamous right-wing Kapp Putsch. This cleared the decks for an all-out attack.

**"Our social democracy at home sometimes wears the face of peaceful reformism...its bloody face is usually seen only in its colonial ventures."**

It started with the shelling of the offices of *Vorwärts*, which had been occupied by militants.

In the following days the brutal riff-raff into whose hands the SPD had thrust the banner of 'Peace, Democracy, Freedom and National Defence' murdered hundreds of militants. On January 15 they butchered Liebknecht and Luxemburg. And in the next four months they succeeded in imposing on the whole of Germany the deadly order they had imposed on Berlin.

As long before as 1884 Friedrich Engels had written to the German socialist leader August Bebel: "In any case, our only opponent on the day of the crisis and on the day afterwards will be the whole reactionary mass grouped around the standard of pure democracy." How right! But what Engels could not foresee was that Bebel's own party, the SPD, would degenerate to become the standard-bearer for that reactionary mass.

Our social democracy at home sometimes wears the face of peaceful reformism, of routine 'progressive' adjustment to capitalism. Its bloody face is usually seen only in its colonial ventures.

The German events outlined here show that the essence of social democracy is defence of the existing order through domination of the working class. While this domination is possible by peaceful means, the social-democracy largely confines itself to those means. But when it is not, the 'socialist' leaders will follow the same road as Ebert, Scheidemann, and Noske.



Karl Liebknecht



Rosa Luxemburg

# The battle of ideas

# Socialism and war

## What Lenin and Zinoviev wrote in 1915

Only a fool believes the "official" accounts of a war. In all modern wars the war-makers use ideas — to mobilise support, to confuse or disarm enemies — and that means that they use lies and misrepresentations. Wars generate hails of lies, like they generate hails of bullets and shells, and for the same purpose: they too are weapons in the struggle.

The governments present themselves in the best light, their opponents in the worst. They proclaim as their aims in the war the most widely acceptable aims they can plausibly (or implausibly!) lay claim to.

Thus, in the early build-up to the Gulf war, some US representatives said it was for oil, while others said it was for the liberty of Kuwait — before they finally settled on their "story", that is, for Kuwait's "liberty" as the best rallying cry.

Today, even many Tories would admit that World War 1 was a monstrously tragic and futile event: millions of casualties, the world economy dislocated for a generation, and the seeds of the Second World War sown within the half-sealed wounds of the First.

At the time both sides told lies about freedom and about the liberation of small nations. Germany claimed to be winning the freedom of the seas from Britain. The eventual victors promised to create a new world order after the slaughter was over: it would be "war to end war".

Millions of workers believed them — and went out to slaughter each other, instead of turning their guns against their own ruling classes.

Lenin and Zinoviev explained that Marxists have no general good-for-all-time response to wars. Socialism will abolish war. War is always savage and barbarous. But we are not pacifists who reject all wars and proclaim all wars equally bad.

Some wars help take humanity forward. For example, when, in the '30s and '40s, the Chinese people fought a war to stop Japan enslaving China, that was a just war, a "good" war in a cause that deserved to win and a cause that could, in the circumstances, only be won by war.

By contrast, twenty years earlier, when the bloc of countries led by Britain and France talked about their war as a war to free "gallant little Belgium", invaded by Germany, Lenin and Zinoviev scoffed at them. Not that Belgium didn't matter: if, they argued, it really were a ganging-up of states to force Germany out of Belgium, and that only, then it would be a just war, deserving of support. Belgium had been invaded, and the British and French did want to drive the Germans out. But in fact Belgium was only a piece in the jigsaw of a world conflict which was not about Belgium but about who should have the right to plunder the colonial world.

Today, Kuwait is not the issue. Oil is. Without oil, the US wouldn't care about Kuwait. And now they have started talking about bringing down the regime in Baghdad — that is,

about conquering and perhaps occupying Iraq. That in turn means turning the clock back 30 and more years, and re-colonising part of the Arab world.

Even if Iraq is not occupied, such a destabilisation of the region is likely to come from the war that the British and US governments will maintain garrisons in the region to protect the interests they fought the war for — in the first place, oil. Since August, when the Iraqi butcher Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, we have moved a long way, politically speaking, from Kuwait!

In this war there is a confusing mixture of types of war. Three decades ago Iraq was still a British-run client state. In invading Kuwait it acted as an imperialist power. It is a savage and brutal oppressor in Kuwait, even though intra-Arab politics place Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations on a special plane. In responding, the old fully-fledged world-dominating imperialist powers — exuberant after their victory in the long struggle with the USSR, and using the cloak of the United Nations — have embarked on a programme which will quickly bring Iraq's national independence into question and maybe to an end, and which, on present evidence, will quickly pit the US and Britain against vast sections of the Arab people.

Despite our hostility to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, in this situation socialists must also look at the broader issues, refuse to fall for the "gallant little Belgium" ploy revived for Kuwait, oppose the moves towards re-colonisation, and support Iraq's right to defend itself against conquest.

Lenin and Zinoviev's text can, naturally, tell us nothing about the Gulf war. It can teach us how to analyse and understand it.

would be "just", "defensive" wars, irrespective of who attacked first; and every Socialist would sympathise with the victory of the oppressed, dependent, unequal states against the oppressing, slave-owning, predatory "great" powers.

But picture to yourselves a slave-owner who owned 100 slaves warring against a slave-owner who owned 200 slaves for a more "just" distribution of slaves. Clearly, the application of the term "defensive" war, or war "for the defence of the fatherland", in such a case would be historically false, and in practice would be sheer deception of the common people, of philistines, of ignorant people, by the astute slave-owners. Precisely in this way are the present-day imperialist bourgeoisie deceiving the peoples by means of "national" ideology and the term "defence of the fatherland" in the present war between slave-owners for fortifying and strengthening slavery.

## The present war is an imperialist war

Nearly everybody admits that the present war is an imperialist war, but in most cases this term is distorted or applied to one side, or a loophole is left for the assertion that this war may, after all, have a bourgeois-progressive, national-liberating significance. Imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism, reached only in the twentieth century. Capitalism now finds the old national states, without the formation of which it could not have overthrown feudalism, too tight for it. Capitalism has developed concentration to such a degree that whole branches of industry have been seized by syndicates, trusts and associations of capitalist billionaires, and almost the entire globe has been divided up among the "lords of capital", either in the form of colonies, or by enmeshing other countries in thousands of threads of financial exploitation.

Free trade and competition have been superseded by the striving for monopoly, for the seizure of territory for the investment of capital, for the export of raw materials from them, and so forth. From the liberator of nations that capitalism was in the struggle against feudalism, imperialist capitalism has become the greatest oppressor of nations. Formerly progressive, capitalism has become reactionary; it has developed the forces of production to such a degree that mankind is faced with the alternative of going over to Socialism or of suffering years and even decades of armed struggle between the "great" powers for the artificial preservation of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges and national oppression of every kind.

## War between the biggest slave-owners for preserving and fortifying slavery

To explain the significance of imperialism, we will quote exact figures showing the division of the world among the so-called "great" (ie. successful in great plunder) powers:

"Great" Powers	1876		1914		1914		Total	
	Square kilometres	Inhabitants	Square kilometres	Inhabitants	Square kilometres	Inhabitants		
England	22.5	251.9	33.5	393.5	0.3	46.5	33.8	440.0
Russia	17.0	15.9	17.4	33.2	5.4	136.2	22.8	169.4
France	0.9	6.0	10.6	55.5	0.5	39.6	11.1	95.1
Germany	—	—	2.9	12.3	0.5	64.9	3.4	77.2
Japan	—	—	0.3	19.2	0.4	53.0	0.7	72.2
United States of America	—	—	0.3	9.7	9.4	97.0	9.7	106.7
Six "great" powers	40.4	273.8	65.0	523.4	16.5	437.2	81.5	960.6
Colonies belonging not to great powers (but to Belgium, Holland and other states)	—	—	9.9	45.3	—	—	9.9	45.3
Three "semi-colonial" countries (Turkey, China and Persia)	—	—	—	—	—	—	14.5	361.2
Other states and countries	—	—	—	—	—	—	28.0	289.9
Entire globe (without Polar regions)	—	—	—	—	—	—	133.9	1,657.0

From this it is seen how most of the nations which fought at the head of others for freedom in 1789-1871, have now, after 1876, on the basis of highly developed and "overripe" capitalism, become the oppressors and enslavers of the majority of the populations and nations of the globe. From 1876 to 1914, six "great" powers grabbed 25 million sq. kilometres, ie. an area of two and a half times that of Europe! Six powers are enslaving over half a billion (532 million) inhabitants of colonies. For every four inhabitants of the "great" powers there are five inhabitants of "their colonies". And everybody knows that colonies are conquered by

Socialists have always condemned war between nations as barbarous and brutal. But our attitude towards war is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace) and of the Anarchists.

We differ from the former in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within the country; we understand that war cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and Socialism is created; and we also differ in that we fully regard civil wars, ie. wars waged by the oppressed class against the oppressing class, slaves against slave-owners, serfs against land-owners, and wage-workers against the bourgeoisie, as legitimate, progressive and necessary.

We Marxists differ from the Anarchists in that we understand the historical necessity of the "defence of the fatherland" in the history of the oppressed class.

**"But the whole point is that the 'triple (and quadruple) entente' is waging war not over Belgium: this is perfectly well known, and only hypocrites conceal this.**

pression.

Therefore, those were progressive wars, and during such wars, all honest, revolutionary democrats, and also all Socialists, always sympathised with the success of that country (ie. with that bourgeoisie), which had helped to overthrow, or sap, the most dangerous foundations of feudalism, absolutism and the oppression of other nations.

For example, the revolutionary wars waged by France contained an element of plunder and conquest of alien territory by the French, but this does not in the least alter the fundamental historical significance of these wars, which destroyed and shattered feudalism and absolutism in the whole of old, serf-ridden Europe.

In the Franco-Prussian war [1870-71], Germany plundered France, but this does not alter the fundamental significance of this war, which liberated tens of millions of German people from feudal disintegration and from the oppression of two despots, the Russian tsar and Napoleon III.

## The difference between aggressive and defensive war

The epoch of 1789-1871 left deep traces and revolutionary memories. Before feudalism, absolutism and alien oppression were overthrown, the development of the proletarian struggle for Socialism was out of the question. When speaking of the legitimacy of "defensive" war in relation to the wars of such an epoch, Socialists always had in mind precisely these objects, which amounted to revolution against medievalism and serfdom. By "defensive" war Socialists always meant a "just" war in this sense.

Only in this sense have Socialists regarded, and now regard, wars "for the defence of the fatherland", or "defensive" wars, as legitimate, progressive and just.

For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, India on England, Persia on Russia, or China on Russia, and so forth, those

**Rosa Luxemburg**

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fire and sword, that the populations of colonies are brutally treated, that they are exploited in a thousand ways (by exporting capital, concessions, etc, cheating when selling them goods, subordination to the authorities of the "ruling" nation, and so on and so forth.)

The Anglo-French bourgeoisie are deceiving the people when they say that they are waging war for the freedom of nations and for Belgium; actually they are waging war for the purpose of retaining the colonies they have inordinately grabbed. The German imperialists would free Belgium, etc, at once if the British and French would agree "fairly" to share their colonies with them. The peculiarity of the situation lies in that in this war the fate of the colonies is being decided by war on the Continent.

From the standpoint of bourgeois justice and national freedom (or the right of nations to existence), Germany would be absolutely right as against England and France, for she has been "done out" of colonies, her enemies are oppressing an immeasurably far larger number of nations than she is, and the Slavs who are oppressed by her ally Austria undoubtedly enjoy more freedom than those in tsarist Russia, that real "prison of nations".

But Germany is fighting not for the liberation, but for the oppression of nations. It is not the business of Socialists to help the younger and stronger robber (Germany) to rob the older and overgorged robbers.

Socialists must take advantage of the struggle between the robbers to overthrow them all. To be able to do this, the Socialists must first of all tell the people the truth, namely, that this war is in a treble sense a war between slave-owners to fortify slavery.

This is a war, firstly, to fortify the enslavement of the colonies by means of a "fairer" distribution and subsequent more "concerted" exploitation of them; secondly, to fortify the oppression of other nations within the "great" powers, for both Austria and Russia (Russia more and much worse than Austria) maintain their rule only by such oppression, intensifying it by means of war; and thirdly, to fortify and prolong wage slavery, for the proletariat is split up and suppressed, while the capitalists gain, making fortunes out of the war, aggravating national prejudices and intensifying reaction, which has raised its head in all countries, even in the freest and most republican.

### 'War is the continuation of politics by other' (ie. violent) 'means'

This famous aphorism was uttered by one of the profoundest writers on the problems of war, Clausewitz. Marxists have always rightly regarded this thesis as the theoretical basis of views concerning the significance of every given war. It was precisely from this viewpoint that Marx and Engels always regarded different wars.

Apply this view to the present war. You will see that for decades, for almost half a century, the governments and the ruling classes of England, and France, and Germany, and Italy, and Austria, and Russia, pursued a policy of plundering colonies, of oppressing other nations, of suppressing the working class movement. It is this, and only this policy that is being continued in the present war. In particular, the policy of both Austria and Russia, in peace-time as well as in war-time, is a policy of enslaving and not of liberating nations.

In China, Persia, India and other dependent countries, on the contrary, we have seen during the past decades a policy of rousing tens and hundreds of millions of people to national life, of liberating them from the oppression of the reactionary "great" powers. A war on such a historical ground can even today be a bourgeois-progressive, national-liberation war.

It is sufficient to glance at the present war from the viewpoint that it is a continuation of the politics of the "great" powers, and of the principal classes within them, to see at once the howling anti-historicalness, falsity and hypocrisy of the view that the "defence of the fatherland" idea can be justified in the present war.

### The example of Belgium

The favourite plea of the social-chauvinist [on the Allied side] is the example of Belgium. But this example goes against them. The German imperialists shamelessly violated the neutrality of Belgium, as belligerent states have done always and everywhere, trampling upon all treaties and obligations if necessary. Let us suppose that all the states interested in the observation of international treaties declared war on Germany with the demand for the liberation and indemnification of Belgium. In such a case, the sympathies of

Socialists would, of course, be on the side of Germany's enemies.

But the whole point is that the "triple (and quadruple) entente" is waging war *not* over Belgium: this is perfectly well known, and only hypocrites conceal this. England is grabbing Germany's colonies and Turkey; Russia is grabbing Galicia and Turkey, France wants Alsace-Lorraine and even the left bank of the Rhine; a treaty has been concluded with Italy for the division of the spoils (Albania, Asia Minor); bargaining is going on with Bulgaria and Rumania, also for the division of the spoils.

In the present war waged by the present governments, it is *impossible* to help Belgium *without* helping to strangle Austria or Turkey, etc! Here does "defence of the fatherland" come in here? Herein, precisely, lies the specific feature of imperialist war, war between reactionary-bourgeois, historically obsolete governments, waged for the purpose of oppressing other nations. Whoever justifies participation in the present war perpetuates imperialist oppression of nations. Whoever advocates taking advantage of the present embarrassments of the governments to fight for the social revolution champions the real freedom of really all nations, which is possible only under Socialism.

### What is social chauvinism?

Social-chauvinism is advocacy of the idea of "defence of the fatherland" in the present war. Further, this idea logically leads to the abandonment of the class struggle during the war, to voting war credits, etc. Actually, the social-chauvinists are pursuing an anti-proletarian, bourgeois policy; for actually they are championing not "defence of the fatherland" in the sense of fighting foreign oppression, but the "right" of one or other of the "great" powers to plunder colonies and to oppress other nations.

The social-chauvinists repeat the bourgeois deception of the people that the war is being waged to protect the freedom and existence of nations, and thereby they go over to the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

In the category of social-chauvinists are those who justify and embellish the governments and bourgeoisie of *one* of the belligerent groups of powers, as well as those who, like Kautsky, argue that the Socialists of *all* the belligerent powers have an equal right to "defend the fatherland". Social-chauvinism, being actually defence of the privileges, advantages, robbery and violence of one's "own" (or every) imperialist bourgeoisie, is the utter betrayal of all socialist convictions.

**AUTOCRACY:** one-person rule

**SERFDOM:** the form of exploitation typical of the Middle Ages, under which peasants (serfs) were tied to the land and had to give produce or labour to the landlord.

**PARIS COMMUNE:** the workers' government which held power in Paris for nine weeks in 1871 before being suppressed by the joint efforts of the French bourgeoisie and the Prussian army which had invaded France.

**THE REVOLUTIONARY WARS WAGED BY**

**FRANCE:** from April 1792 the revolutionary regime in France — where the absolute monarchy had been overthrown in 1789 — was at war with most of the other major powers in Europe.

**FEUDALISM:** the mode of production typical of the Middle Ages, dominated by hereditary landlords exploiting peasants through relations of serfdom (qv).

**ABSOLUTISM:** as capitalism developed in the cities of feudal Europe, the kings and their state bureaucracies gained more centralised power, balancing between the landlords and the rising capitalist class. The kings claimed 'absolute', ie. dictatorial power.

**FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR:** 19th century Germany was divided into dozens of small states. Prussia was the biggest. In 1870 France (then ruled by the Emperor Napoleon III) invaded Prussia. Prussia quickly turned the tables and invaded France. On the basis of that victory it unified all the German states except Austria. (The king of Prussia became emperor of Germany).

**MOROCCO:** was in 1915 a colony of France, and India of England. Persia (Iran) and China were under the joint domination of various powers, including Russia.

**IMPERIALISM:** from the mid-19th century this term took on the meaning of a drive by big powers to acquire colonies and spheres of influence and to tie them together into a cohesive economic unit.

**BELGIUM:** was invaded by Germany in World War 1.

**AUSTRIA:** here signifies the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then one of the great powers of Europe, ruling modern Czechoslovakia, part of Poland, etc.

**GALICIA:** the bit of Poland then ruled by Austria.

**ALSACE-LORRAINE:** border area between France and Germany.

**TURKEY:** then ruled a large empire, which was carved up after the war; Britain took Iraq, Jordan and Palestine; and France Syria and Lebanon.

**"You will see that for decades, for almost half a century, the governments and the ruling classes of England, and France, and Germany, and Italy, and Austria, and Russia, pursued a policy of plundering colonies, of oppressing other nations, of suppressing the working class movement."**

Extracts from *Socialism and War* by Lenin and Zinoviev. The Stalinists later re-wrote history by attributing the pamphlet to Lenin only.

## The battle of ideas

The left and the United Nations

# A little idealism is a dangerous thing

## THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Patrick Murphy



A little idealism is a dangerous thing. Take, for example, the long-standing attachment of the mainstream left to the United Nations. Neil Kinnock has used the idea of UN sanctions against Iraq quite cynically to make it easier to carry his MPs with him in craven support of war.

Even wavering Labour MPs went along with Kinnock's petulant machismo because the UN were seen to have taken the initiative. The "allied" troops were sent, they deluded themselves, on UN business. Faith in this august body doesn't stop there.

The serious left in Parliament, the anti-war left, also place great store in the UN. Its original policy was working, they say, sanctions should have been given more time, the UN has been tragically hijacked by the US and her allies. Perhaps the most tragic consequence of this whole crisis, said one dissident, will be the long-term loss of credibility suffered by the UN. Leaving aside the chilling compacency this sort of judgement implies about the other consequences of the war, I beg to differ. The sooner the UN loses the aura of respect it enjoys with the mainstream left the better.

The vague ideal at the root of this is the hope to see a "world government". On one

level it is a tremendous internationalist vision but, as with most of their ideals, the traditional left believe in it half-heartedly and hope that it will evolve out of existing institutions. The Labour Party between the world wars came to have a tremendous respect for the League of Nations, the forerunner of the UN. The record of the League is now infamous, it was highly inconsistent, unable to act against aggression without the say-sos of the dominant powers within it, at this time Britain and France.

After World War 2 the idea of an international body to avoid conflict was revised and the UN established. The problem of the League was considered to have been lack of teeth, so the UN had troops, but in fact the problem was more complicated. On the one hand it was in no way independent of the major powers and nor could it be. In addition, the relations between powers in the 1930s had been rapidly changing so that no one power could give the League authority and power. Nevertheless, the UN carried over the optimism of liberal and reformist politicians, with Labour central again.

In the post-war era the UN had to take account of the developing cold war. Its troops were used in Suez, Cyprus and Lebanon when the major powers, and particularly the US, wanted a minimum level of stability for the least political cost. A better understanding of the UN can be gained, however, by considering the times when its troops, or indeed any other sanction, were not used.

The Soviet Union invaded Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, the US in-

vaded Vietnam, Grenada and Panama, and destabilised Nicaragua. There was not the slightest possibility that the UN would act against these crimes, and nor will they in the future. The structure of the UN gives five powers (US, USSR, Britain, China and France) a permanent veto on any decisions by the Security Council. This not only enables them to act with impunity, it also extends protection to their closest allies.

The UN's various bodies have passed comprehensive resolutions demanding a Palestinian state and Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, but Israel is an important ally of the US with considerable influence in US politics. Powerful resolutions on South African apartheid and destabilising of neighbouring countries have existed for years without the swift action taken against Iraq. This again is because South Africa was doing an important job in the region, however clumsily, and the alternative was considered to be communism.

The League of Nations stands condemned in history for much less serious inconsistencies and in much more difficult circumstances.

**"The structure of the UN enables the big powers to act with impunity."**

Consider the behaviour of some prominent UN members during the first weeks of the internationally-inspired Gulf initiative. China has chosen this moment to try and jail the leaders of the Tiananmen Square upris-

ing, in which thousands died and the UN did nothing. Burma has been rounding up dissidents and strike leaders who came close to toppling the brutal regime there recently. The Soviet Union, in the best known case, chose this time to move troops in to crush Lithuanian independence.

Across the world, governments used the conflict to further their own interests, Israel and Syria for more financial aid, Bush and Major for domestic support in the midst of a looming recession.

None of this would alter if the UN were reformed because the decisive divisions in the world are between classes not nations, and the members of the UN are all parts of the same class. The UN can keep the lid on disputes between minor miscreants who disrupt their exploitation of the world's markets and resources, but in any conflict between the major powers it is impotent.

War between the US and USSR after 1945 was avoided only by the bluff and counter-bluff of mutual destruction, when it was not fought out by surrogates in the developing world. Now that the eastern bloc is cracking the UN may become the permanent cover for a US-dominated new world order, but one point at least should be clear. The UN can only reflect the interests of the dominant imperialist powers — it is not neutral between, or independent of, their interests.

Socialists should stop looking to a convention of capitalist governments to end wars and conflicts and concentrate instead on dealing with the real cause of these conflicts — the rapacious systems these governments defend to the death.

# When bad politics makes bad art



Scene from *Hidden Agenda*

## AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



"The book is devoted to the Chinese revolution... A fine and well-knit style, the discriminating eye of an artist, original and daring observation — all confer upon the novel an exceptional importance. If we write about it here it is not because the book is a work of talent, although this is not a negligible fact, but because it offers a source of political lessons of the highest value. Do they come from Malraux? No, they flow from the recital itself, unknown to the author, and they go against him. This does honour to the author as an observer and an artist, but not as a revolutionist. However, we have the right to evaluate Malraux too from this point of view; in his own name and above all in the name of Garine, his other self, the author does not hesitate with his judgments on the revolution. This book is called a novel. As a matter of fact, we have before us a romanticised chronicle of the Chinese revolution..."

(Leon Trotsky, "The Strangled Revolution", February 1931 — commenting on Andre Malraux's novel "Les Conquerants").

Zhdanov (mentioned in Charlie Murray's letter, SO 472) was Stalin's ideological and cultural

policeman in the 1940s.

He proclaimed that Soviet art had to serve state-decreed goals and that it should be produced in conformity with, and in the service of, the ruling Stalinist ideology. It was the job of the ideological police of the totalitarian state, backed by the political police, to enforce this ruling; and they did.

Charlie Murray can't possibly be accusing me of wanting some system like that, so I'm not sure what his very laconic letter meant to accuse me of.

*Hidden Agenda* is an explicitly political film. Its subject is politics, and it is shaped — indeed, made lumpy and twisted! — to make it a vessel able to carry the makers' views on the political subjects dealt with. With their blinkered propaganda they come close to "voluntary Zhdanovism". Charlie Murray seems to me to be "dangerously close" to equating with Stalinism all political judgment and assessment of anything presented as a work of art — even when, as in this case, it is a work of political propaganda thinly fictionalised.

The crime of Stalinism against art was to try to make art a handmaiden of politics and a slave to the various dogmas peculiar to Stalinism and to the bureaucratic social class that Stalin represented — that is, to make art a mere illustration of predetermined propaganda.

It stifled living art within prescribed forms favoured by the top bureaucrats, forms to which the bureaucratic pope and his car-

dinals ascribed an imaginary significance. In fact this was often a matter of semi-ignorant bureaucrats erecting their own taste in art and music into a rigid, arbitrarily-prescribed standard for everyone and for all time: for example, Beethoven and mid 19th century painting, given a quasi-religious Stalinist gloss.

And — as the prerequisite for everything else — Stalinism locked art and music, like the whole of society, within a totalitarian state repression. The Stalinist treatment of art was regulated by the state's need to dominate everything, its need to paralyse the collective mind of society, rather than by artistic or literary concerns.

To go from condemnation of Stalinism to rejecting all political judgment or criticism, even of crude propagandist "art" like *Hidden Agenda*, is to rule out politics completely. It is, in general, to abandon an important part of the ideological struggle.

Or does Charlie Murray object to the comment in my article that Loach's film proves that you can't have revolutionary art without revolutionary Marxist theory? That was overstated and one-sided. What I wanted to say would have been better put with the qualification "conscious revolutionary art".

For, of course, it is true that you can have revolutionary art produced even by reactionaries. Marx once explained that about the novels of Honore de Balzac, who wrote honestly and truthfully about French society in the first half of the 19th century and thereby, said Marx, produced revolutionary art, though in politics Balzac was a pretty thorough reactionary.

And not only on Balzac's level. Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason stories have — to go by two or three I've read — characters a great deal more stiff and one-dimensional, and stories more mechanical, than most other mass-sale detective writing — and yet Gardner's portrayal of the system of American justice, with conniving attorneys and an irresponsible collusive press, is a startlingly radical (and, I believe, true) picture of reality. Believe it, and scales will fall off your eyes.

Without being consciously revolutionary

or Marxist, you could produce a truthful, and therefore, in Marx's sense above, revolutionary, work of art about Northern Ireland. The real John Stalker proves the point in his own way — that truth is revolutionary — and he wasn't trying to write fiction or be a revolutionary!

But, conversely, you can set out to be very revolutionary, in a sincere spirit of devotion to socialism, to the working class, and to Irish freedom, but set out so loaded down with preconceptions and prejudices that you cannot comprehend reality. You don't even try: instead you use facets of reality to illustrate what you already "know", making not an honest objective exposition of your subject, but a "commercial" for your political prejudices.

You can veer so enormously from what Marx described in Balzac — truth, honest recording — that you do not depict reality at all. You destructure and fillet reality to fit your own dogmas and preconceptions. You get from your false revolutionary dogmas not a Balzacian-revolutionary relationship to reality, but the relationship of someone who erects aspects of the reality into dogmas through which to try to "view" the whole, instead of experiencing and assessing it in a fresh and open way. That is what Loach and Allen get, looking at Ireland through old dogmas and outmoded ideas, sustained by a culpable suppression of outstanding facts (their entire viewpoint depends on the pretence that two thirds of Northern Ireland's population does not exist).

*Hidden Agenda* does illustrate the point I made, even though I expressed it inadequately. For the conscious would-be revolutionary artist, dealing with a subject about which he or she holds finely worked out, emotionally charged ideas, there is — outside of accidents and serendipity — no artistic practice without revolutionary theory, that is, fresh Marxist understanding of the reality he or she is consciously trying to recreate and reconceptualise as a revolutionary artist.

Perhaps I generalise too sweepingly here, yet again: but I have no doubt it is the truth about what went wrong with *Hidden Agenda*.

Over to you, Charlie Murray...

# They shoot children don't they?

## Television

By Jean Lane

There are many programmes on TV these days that can make you cry. Films like *My Left Foot*, documentaries on the brave struggle of AIDS sufferers to survive, and so on. Everyman's *They Shoot Children, Don't They* was not one. A lump in the throat, even tears, are not adequate responses to this film.

It is a documentary about children living on the streets of Guatemala, surviving only by sniffing glue to blot out reality and hold hunger at bay; preyed upon by right-wing police squads who kidnap, torture and murder them.

Guatemala was described by the commentator as "a new democracy". Can this be so? Is it possible to describe a society in which seven or eight year old children have their eyes burnt out and their tongues and ears cut off before being kicked to death and dumped on a rubbish tip a "democracy"?

Guatemala fairly recently was kitted out with a parliament and elections. In reality the army still rules, but elections give illusions that working class people have a say in how society is run. What goes on in between is beyond their control. This is bourgeois democracy.

The film showed how attempts are being made to bring the policemen responsible to justice. The records of those on duty have been tampered with, identities changed, witnesses and even judges too frightened to turn up to the courts to give or hear the evidence. The police get off.

At my first anti-war meeting a couple of weeks ago, a young man stood up and said: "The Western governments say they are going into the Middle East to defend democracy. How dare they preach to the Middle East about democracy. Look at London. Look at New York. Rape, murder, robbery, hunger and homelessness. Is this your democracy? You can keep it. I want no part of it."

Bourgeois democracy describes the mechanisms of the system — the way it is run — not the horrors that go on within it. And there are grades of this democracy, grades of horrors. I would rather live in the London so eloquently described by the young man than be a child of the Guatemalan street. Nevertheless, it is the same system — the same "democracy". A democracy that I want no part of either.

## Oh that these words could suckle them

Oh that this pen could heal the minds of women, men  
 Oh that the ink could flow from her to them  
 That Love and Peace could transfuse their veins  
 That hearts could pump these words around in chains  
 Lock the hatred out that feeds their minds to boil  
 Oh that these words could stop their cries of 'Blood for Oil!'  
 Oh send the war birds back to their home nest  
 Stop now the Death drums beating from the West  
 Those who think they've played their only Ace should think again  
 Players, jokers on their decks — all B-astard 52 of them.  
 Sucklings still, who once embraced the breast  
 — now embrace the orders of sick men  
 Oil wells suckle them.  
 Oh that a mother's milk could be expressed  
 And stored within the wells in place of oil  
 Then weanlings would take flight, desert  
 The cards of peace would then upon the table re-assert  
 Then justice could begin to surge and swell  
 I am not mad, still, for all my hopes  
 — I can smell Hell.

Jenny Evans



Street children of Brazil. Here, too, these children have been gunned down and beaten to death by vigilante groups.

Democracy is not a dirty word. It has been made dirty by the bourgeoisie. But even that is better than dictatorship, feudalism, or military rule.

The young man ended his speech by saying "I speak for Islam". But the system ruled by god is not a democracy and will not stop the murders, the rapes, the abuse of children.

Many people will blame their mothers. Why are they letting them turn to the streets? Or their families: why don't they keep their children at home?

I don't blame the mothers, or the families. I blame the system. I don't ask god to sort it out, either. We have to take the responsibility for changing society into our own hands: the ordinary people, the working class, the mothers and the families — the people who have been fobbed off with a vote every

once in a while in the name of democracy, while they live in hell.

Our version of democracy is different. It is good. It is one in which ordinary people rule: in which police, politicians, administrators, officers are accountable to the peo-

ple who put them there, and are removable when they fail, immediately. Our kind of democracy is one in which the weakest in society — the children — are protected by us all, not preyed upon. No god can do that for us. No individual,

poor, disenfranchised mother can do it, just for her own children. We have to do it ourselves for the whole of society. Don't cry when you see this programme. Don't waste your tears. Determine, instead, to fight for real, workers' democracy.

## You've seen the film, now smoke the cigar

### Cinema

Mike Grayson reviews *Havana*

Cuba, Christmas 1958. A country teeters on the brink of revolution. Dictator Batista's secret police terrorise the population...and history again becomes a backdrop for director Sydney Pollack's favourite theme of mismatched lovers finding brief happiness before the inevitable separation.

The basics: Robert Redford plays Jack Weil, gambler, loner and Very Boring Person. Lena Olin plays Bobbi — a glamorous, Swedish-born revolutionary (stop laughing). No one else plays any character sufficiently defined to be worth mentioning.

Jack and Bobbi meet and get the hots for each other. But they are torn apart by the unlucky circumstance that Bobbi's husband turns out to be not as dead as we were led to believe.

Yes, I am deliberately spoiling



If you want to know who Castro was, don't go and see this film

the film's ending so that you will not waste your money going to see it. It's for your own good, believe me.

The Bobbi character makes a very unconvincing revolutionary. We never get any real insight into why she turned away from a wealthy background to help Castro.

Looking well-coiffed and manicured at all times, to me she suggests a vision of someone sprinting to the barricades by way of the beautician's, pausing only to grab pistol and eye-shadow.

Her political convictions do not, however, run all that deep since she quickly accepts Jack's offer to get her out of Cuba on the first boat.

Now I suppose that, given the choice between battling a brutal dictatorship and sailing the Caribbean bonking with Robert Redford, she would be forgiven a moment's hesitation, but even a little bit of soul-searching would have been much more real.

The Jack Wild character is too dull even to be worth poking fun at.

If you go to see this film hoping to learn about the Cuban revolution, you won't. There is a single, short scene in which it is made clear that the US government was propping up the Batista dictatorship and that's it.

Pollack simply isn't interested in examining the politics of the situation in any depth. He just wants some eye-catching scenery to back up a very mediocre love story.

Go and see *Arachnophobia* instead.

# Unfair to Lansbury

## WRITEBACK

It is somewhat unfair to the memory of George Lansbury to compare him to Michael Foot.

Foot, with the rest of the *Tribune* group, supported the campaign to get rid of Lansbury. William Mellor, the initial editor of *Tribune*, did not, but they got rid of him.

The Socialist League was in the main a Popular Frontist (i.e. Stalinist fellow-travelling) organisation, though Reg Groves led a Trotskyist minority. It did not therefore campaign for

Lansbury, indeed it was to be part of the campaign against him.

The Third Period was still on when Lansbury was elected, so that the Socialist League had not yet adopted the stance it later took up. No doubt individual members of the Socialist League would have campaigned for Lansbury, but the three groups that later fused into the League as remembered (two splinters from the Independent Labour Party and one from the Fabians) would not have had a unified position.

Lansbury had come to the leadership a lot earlier than these battles: the Stalinists were calling him social-



Foot opposed Lansbury

fascist, and saying that left social-fascists were worse than right. The upsurge that put him into power — not much was needed, as he was the senior Labour Cabinet minister left after the defections of Ramsay MacDonald and his gang — was before

the secession of the ILP, and thus before the creation of the Socialist League.

Laurens Otter, Wellington, Salop.

Write to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

# BAe war profiteers axe 4,500 jobs

By an AEU steward

Britain's biggest exporter British Aerospace (Engineering) is having a good war. So say the business supplements.

The company that makes 75 per cent of its profits out of weapons will have plenty of orders coming its way. As the *Independent on Sunday* reported:

"With the number of bombing raids on Iraq climbing towards 15,000 and with a ground war likely to follow, a huge quantity of munitions will be consumed. Most of the Royal Ordnance factories which BAe bought in 1987 have been working overtime for several months."

The Ministry of Defence has said that it will guarantee that BAe gets 80 per cent of any extra ammunition orders. This, on top of work for the ALARM anti-radar missile rushed into production for the Gulf war, will ensure that Britain's biggest private industrial company makes huge profits out of the slaughter.

BAe bosses are very cynical indeed.

Take, for example, the Al Yamamah project. This involves providing everything for the Saudi air force, from planes to weapons to airfields and training.

According to Dave Gollop, secretary of the manual workers shop stewards combine, BAe have arranged for this giant contract to be paid for in oil. A very nice insurance policy, whatever the immediate fluctuations in the market price of crude oil. For the price will almost certainly go up once it becomes clear the war will be a long and protracted one.

But such 'hot prospects' from war in the Gulf have not deterred BAe bosses from attacking workers on the home front.

4,500 face the dole at the Kingston, Dunsfold and Preston plants. Management's propaganda says that following

the cancellation of an RAF Tornado order military orders are on a downward spiral! The plants will have to close.

The trade unions campaigning against the closures base their case for keeping the plants open on the idea of transferring production to non-military use. "We will be advocating a change to civil work," argued Kingston

AEU convenor Bert Long when the closures were announced.

Dave Gollop made the same point. "Despite the war we are still campaigning for our factories to be switched over to the production of civilian aircraft."

"We've got to convert now, our problem is short-term."

And in the short-term Dave was worried that war in the Gulf

would mean less orders for civilian aircraft. The current Iraqi terrorist scare has certainly hit the airlines hard, with falling passengers lists. They are thus less likely to put in new orders.

BAe is Tory Britain in miniature: trade unionists facing the dole who want to switch to civilian work and bosses who profit from war.

## Anti-war action

### Liverpool

Students from Liverpool colleges marched through the city last Thursday (24 January) in opposition to the Gulf war, on a demonstration called by the Merseyside Area Students Organisation.

Two days later 800 people marched through Birkenhead on a demonstration called by the Wirral Committee Against the Gulf War, the demonstration finishing with a rally addressed by Tony Benn.

Liverpool Labour Party Socialists has called an open meeting in early February for Labour Party members on Merseyside, in order to coordinate and encourage anti-war campaigning within the Labour Party.

A measure of the opposition to the war amongst Labour Party members in Liverpool can be gained from the unanimous support given to a resolution moved last week at Riverside CLP which called for the withdrawal of all American and European forces from the Gulf.

The MP for Riverside, Bob Parry, who has defied the Labour whip on four occasions by voting against the Tories' policies on the Gulf, reported

that only one of the letters which he had received after opposing the war was critical.

Garston CLP in Liverpool has already held a public meeting against the war, and Riverside CLP is now also organising a public meeting.

Other anti-war activities on Merseyside planned for the immediate future include workplace leafletting and a demonstration in protest at media bias and censorship.

Stan Crooke

### Sheffield

Over 2,000 anti-war protesters marched through the centre of Sheffield on Saturday calling for an end to the war in the Gulf.

Labour Party banners were carried alongside trade union banners in one of the biggest demonstrations Sheffield has seen for years.

The march was organised by Sheffield Against the War in the Gulf, with speakers including representatives from the NUM, CND, and the Iraqi Democratic Opposition.

Sheffield MPs were conspicuous by their absence with none of them having opposed the government in the last Parliamentary vote.

South Yorkshire Area NUS held a meeting at the end of the demo for all school and college students which was attended by over 40 activists. A demonstration has been planned for Wednesday 6 February where students will form a human

chain between an army barracks and a major Sheffield hospital.

This will be followed by a teach-in at the University, and a meeting on racism and deportations.

Fiona Monkman and Steph Ward

### Manchester

More than 100 people gathered in Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens on Saturday to support Women for Peace in the Gulf.

A group of about 30 women made their point by lying on the steps of the statue in 'bodybags' while the all-women band played rousing music.

A representative of the group said the action would 'draw attention to the unnecessary human suffering that this war is causing, and make known our opposition to a war which is being fought for oil, not democracy.'

About eight men were soon made unwelcome when they tried to attack the demonstration. Earlier one demonstrator was attacked by others who opposed the action.

The demonstration was followed by a march to the Peace Gardens in St Peter's Square where a women's peace camp was set up. Despite facing attack women have agreed to hold another 24-hour peace camp this weekend.

Liz Kessler

# How we are building the anti-war movement in Nottingham

500 JOIN ANTI-WAR PROTEST



By Tim Cooper

**S**ocialist Organiser has played a key role in the development of one of the best, united campaigns in the country.

Behind the slogans 'No to War!', 'Troops out of the Gulf!' and 'Iraq out of Kuwait', CND, Labour Parties, trade unions, black, Muslim and Jewish organisations, Green Party and socialist groups are all backing the campaign.

This enabled us to have a 500-strong demonstration in the centre of Nottingham within hours of war breaking out.

A daily vigil is being maintained in the town centre, and this gives us a central co-ordinating point for activities.

Over 5,000 people signed a petition against war in the two days before war broke out. Predictably, this support fell sharply in the first few days of war. The vigil was attacked on two occasions. But now it has started to come home to people that this will not be a quick and clean war, but a bloody and drawn out one, and support has been rising steadily again.

SO supporters have carried the struggle into the Labour Party, which has been vital to the campaign. A number of wards and Nottingham South constituency have affiliated to the campaign. Anti-war Labour MPs such as Bob Clay, Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn have spoken at meetings.

Tony Benn spoke at two very successful meetings just before war broke out.

Rosey Sibley, who chaired the joint meeting between the

Poly Labour Club and Nottingham Against the War in the Gulf said: "It was excellent. Over 500 people packed the hall and more turned up who couldn't be housed so an overflow meeting was quickly arranged."

Alan Simpson, the PPC for Nottingham South, has been a prominent supporter of the campaign, in stark contrast to Nottingham's only Labour MP Graham Allen. This shameless careerist has taken over the Shadow Cabinet post left by anti-war protestor Tony Banks.

A march and rally on Saturday 1 February is expected to attract over 1,000 people as the campaign begins to reach out to more and more people. Leaflets have been translated into Asian languages and distributed at Mosques, etc.

At least one Labour Party ward is delivering leaflets door to door to thousands of homes.

Pete Radcliff, who is convenor of the Nottingham Against War in the Gulf campaign, has urged all individuals and groups to join.

The SWP and RCP who have tried in typical sectarian fashion to set up their own campaigns over the past few months have reluctantly joined the campaign rather than risk further disaffection in their own ranks.

# Student women demand abortion rights in Ireland

By Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer

Last Wednesday (23 January) around fifty students picketed the Irish embassy in protest at Ireland's repressive abortion laws.

In the Republic of Ireland, abortion is not only illegal, but unconstitutional. Legal precedents have — in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church — put the life of the foetus above that of the mother. In one tragic case, a pregnant woman with cervical cancer was denied chemotherapy because of the harm it might cause to the foetus. Both mother and baby died. So much for 'pro-life'.

Irish student unions are locked in a legal battle with the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) over distribution of information about abortion. Adverts

for abortion clinics are removed from Irish editions of British magazines. Providers of non-directive counselling (such as Ruth Riddick's Open Line) have been forced to close. There is a phonenumber for women facing crisis pregnancies — but publishing it is illegal!

Every year, thousands of Irish women travel to Britain to have abortions (despite Irish law allowing pregnant women to be stopped from leaving the country).

In Ireland, women are struggling not just for their right to choose, but even for the basic right to information about their choices.

The picket was organised by the London School of Economics Student Union, and was supported by both NUS London and the NUS Women's Campaign. It was addressed by speakers from the National Abortion Campaign, Women Against Fundamentalism, NUS, and the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group.

## WHAT'S ON

### Wednesday 30 January

Clause 25 protest meeting, Manchester Town Hall, 7.00. Speakers include Joan Lester  
National student shut-down against the Gulf war  
Student demonstration against the Gulf war, Manchester. Assemble 12.30, All Saints. Organised by MANUS  
Anti-war meeting, West Sussex Institute, 7.30. Speakers include Mark Sandell

'Crisis in the USSR', Socialist Organiser meeting at Essex University Students Union, Colchester, 6.30

Student anti-war demonstration called by NUS London. Assemble

1.30, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1

### Friday 1 February

Kurdish and Turkish People Against the Gulf War campaign, picket of Turkish Embassy to protest against Turkey's involvement in the war, 2.00-4.00, 43 Belgrave Sq, London SW1

### Saturday 2 February

National demonstration to stop the war, called by CND. Assemble noon at Embankment (Charing Cross), London  
Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM, Bristol section, 11 to 5, Totterdown YMCA, Bushy Park, Totterdown. The other

sections of the AGM are on 9 February in Sheffield and 16 February in London: details from Danny Nicol, 6 Courtleigh, Bridge Lane, London NW11 0EB

### Monday 4 February

Islington Labour Against War meeting. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP and Alice Mahon MP. 7.30, Red Rose, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7

### Thursday 7 February

'Stop the War!' Socialist Organiser meeting at Manchester University Students Union, 5.00

### Saturday 9 February

Scottish Labour Party Socialists

Conference, 10.30-5.00, Drummond Community School, Edinburgh. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn

### Monday 11 February

London Socialist Organiser Forum, 7.30, London School of Economics, Houghton St, WC2

### Saturday 16 February

'A strategy for the Labour left', London LPS conference. Camden Town Hall, 10.00-5.30

### Thursday 21 February

'Crisis in the USSR', Socialist Organiser meeting at Manchester University Students Union, 5.00

# War a 'positive development', says Norman Willis

By Tom Rigby

All the signs are that Norman Willis is determined to pull the trade union movement in-line behind Kinnock's support for the Gulf slaughter.

A statement from the TUC General Council last week took a very bellicose line, declaring: "The full support of British trade unionists for the allied forces in pursuit of a just outcome."

The General Council also appears to back the Kinnock/Kaufman fantasy that Bush and Major are fighting for a new world order.

"While we regret that sanctions were not given longer to operate, that issue is passed and the *positive development* which must come out of the war is the enhancement of the authority of the UN, its charter..."

You would have thought that some of the seasoned right-wingers at the top of the TUC would have been a little

more cautious: after all, their old mate Denis Healey is busy warning everyone that this will be a long and bloody war resulting in the powers "fighting over the corpse of Iraq for decades". But then they always did leave the thinking to Denis.

The statement is so jingoistic that it doesn't even explicitly express concern at the possibility of heavy Iraqi civilian casualties.

Despite this bad news there is reason to hope that quite widespread trade union opposition to this war can be mobilised.

Ron Todd, General Secretary of the TGWU — the *pivotal* union within the Labour Party — has said that any conflict would be "a ghastly war with incalculable consequences". Will he stick to his principles or join the pro-war lobby? So far he has remained silent. It's up to T&G activists to keep up the pressure on the 'Broad Left' leadership.

MSF, the FBU, BETA and the NUM all sponsor the

Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. The NALGO and NUT executives are very evenly divided on the issue. The NUJ has put out a series of guidelines for its members on reporting the war which includes the following piece of advice: "Journalists in the field are not there as public relations officers for the British Army. They are not on 'our side'; their duty is to report truthfully." The same circular warns of the dangers of "self-censorship" by editors and journalists.

The RMT appears to be divided, with the railworkers opposing the war, but seafarers' leader Sam McCluskie insisting the union must back the war because he has 900 members in the Gulf.

So there is a reasonably firm base for building widespread support for the anti-war cause within the unions. What's needed is a broad-based trade union campaign uniting all those who want to stop the war now.

## DSS staffing campaign needs boost

By Margaret Dooley, NUCPS Assistant Branch Secretary

The situation in Wallasey DSS remains the same — for over three weeks now

## 'No support from our section executive'

By Tom Sherlock, Wallasey CPSA (sub-branch Chair)

For three weeks now we've been on strike over staffing levels in the local office. From the start, we've been pushing for the promotion of 7 AAs and them replaced with permanent staff.

On 18 January an offer was made to us of five promotions

the CPSA has joined the dispute over staffing which effectively means the local office cannot operate.

The four people crossing the picket line are basically just referring claimants onto the emergency payment centre in

and their replacement with workers on fixed term contracts. That offer was overwhelmingly rejected, by 55 to 1 abstention, because we want to secure permanent posts rather than more casual workers.

It now looks as if management may have conceded that and we are looking for a new offer later this week.

We still need an overall strategy for both unions. But it doesn't look like we will get the support we need from the CPSA Section Executive.

• Strike office : 051 639 8472

Bootle. Now the CPSA are out we're doing our best through collections, donations, etc, to make up their strike pay and ensure no one goes back to work through lack of money.

Since the New Year NUCPS members in another four offices — Mansfield, Port Talbot and two in Scotland — have been balloted and joined the strike, and there has been a push to stop overtime in all other offices. Locally the campaign's been quite successful with Birkenhead North and South and Chester agreeing to work no overtime for a month.

Nationally, it is unclear what the strategy is from now — more offices are to be balloted, or what. Our branch has put forward the idea of calling wildcat strikes across all offices to give the campaign some more impetus.

• For donations or speakers contact NUCPS Strike Committee, c/o Wallasey Unemployed Centre, 108 Seaview Road, Wallasey. Cheques payable to CPSA DSS Wirral.

## Media workers against war

By Steven Holt, Taylor & Francis striker

The inaugural meeting of this campaign packed Conway Hall with over 800 activists from the media unions.

The media have an important role in countering the hypocrisy of state propaganda concerning the present war. For instance, United Nations condemnation has not led to military action to defend the Palestinians' rights, or to oppose the genocide of the people of East Timor by the Indonesian army. This war is for oil.

We are already seeing censorship of the press and broadcasting: a photograph of an anti-war demonstration was doctored in the *Observer* and a *Panorama* programme about Western involvement in arming Iraq has been cancelled, as had a repeat broadcast of a programme based on letters written by a

woman who lived through the bombing of Hamburg in the last world war.

Iraqi people, even those most opposed to Saddam Hussein, are not given a voice on television programmes discussing what should be done with Iraq after the war.

Among the suggestions for action were the following:

- One-day strikes at national newspapers, and the reason for their non-appearance to be reported by other papers;

- Picket of BBC premises;
- Picket of the TUC and lobbying against the disgusting pro-war policy that the TUC has adopted;

- Publication of a bulletin detailing examples of censorship and getting across information rather than propaganda;

- Set up workplace anti-war branches to enable media workers to oppose collectively all censorship and imperialist propaganda in the media.

A committee will be set up to run the campaign next Monday evening at Conway Hall.

## Glasgow guards' victory

By Joe Motherwell, ASLEF, West of Scotland

The second 24-hour strike by guards at Queen Street on Monday 14 January led to a partial climbdown by management on the issue of promotion of five guards to drivers positions.

An initial offer of £12,000 for each guard was rejected on the basis that this was tied to an agreement that the guards would proceed to an appeal and only if they failed this appeal would compensation be granted.

The RMT called for a ballot of all guards in the RMT in the Scottish Region which took place on Friday 19 January, to ensure

the promotion of all members who had passed the appropriate tests as agreed in the 'Transport Concept Agreement'.

However, Monday's action was then called off pending talks with management.

The only clear outcome of the talks was the acceptance of the original figure of £12,000 each with possible payment at the higher drivers rate with the guards remaining guards.

Although nobody wants to see anybody driving trains with alcohol problems, the strike was mainly about making adhere to agreements, and not letting 'suitability clauses' being introduced retrospectively in breach of the Agreement.

The RMT and its rank and file guards should be clear about the importance of the Transport Concept Agreement if new rules are proposed in the aftermath of this strike.

## Stealth...or tornado?

A 'consultative document' from the TUC is not the sort of thing to get the pulse racing, even at the best of times. So it is hardly surprising, just at the moment, that a TUC paper on union recognition has slipped by almost unnoticed.

The document has been prepared by Congress House boffins and is intended to be a "first step" towards achieving legal enforcement of union recognition under a Labour government. But before you get over-excited, it should be noted that the proposed strategy is a very cautious "step-by-step" series of rights that would only enforce negotiating rights once more than half a given workforce were unionised. Before that stage is reached, there would be a graded series of rights: at 20 to 30% membership, for instance, unions would only have to be 'consulted' on pay and conditions.

The plan is to agree a TUC statement — based on the document — by late spring or early summer. Then it would be adopted by various union conferences and the Labour leadership would be appointed to stitch things up

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

before the party conference. At the moment, Labour is committed to statutory recognition in principle, but has yet to specify any details.

The document's supporters (notably Norman Willis and John Edmonds) would like to present it as a sort of Stealth bomber: a cunning and sophisticated weapon for enforcing recognition, evading enemy radar and immune to flak. Others are not so

convinced. Even Congress House officials privately admit that the proposals are 'pretty weak' and full of potential dangers (like, what if employers use the 'step-by-step' approach to *de-recognise* unions?). What about employers who simply get rid of anyone who joins a union?

At a TUC General Council meeting on January 23, no agreement was reached, suggesting that some General Secretaries don't see the proposal as a Stealth, so much as a Tornado — just too easy to shoot down.

The bizarre saga of the TGWU ballot-rigging scandal continues. As you may know, when evidence of an attempt to introduce some 9,000 fraudulent ballot papers into last year's NEC elections came to light, General Secretary Ron Todd immediately stopped the elections, and ordered an internal union investigation.

When this failed to bring the culprit(s) to light, Todd brought in the cops and gave them a copy of his own report into the matter.

Since then, the union's well-organised right wing have been doing their best to spread the story that the ballot-rigging was the work of the union's Broad Left (which presently has a 22-17 majority on the NEC). The right has been aided in

this campaign by a number of reports in the national papers, all of which refer to Todd's internal report. But only two copies of this report originally existed — Todd's personal copy and the one he handed over to Inspector Knacker.

So how is it that the secretaries of the union's Regions 1, 4, 5, 8 and 11 all have copies of the report? It turns out that Inspector Knacker sent them out to the Regional Secretaries who had been particularly co-operative and they (or at least, one of them) sent further copies out to the press.

Todd (not surprisingly) has hit the roof at this latest example of treachery by the right wing regional barons. He (rightly) sees it as part of a build-up of smears and innuendos intended to jeopardise the chances of his chosen successor, Bill Morris, in this year's General Secretary election.

Todd has actually conducted himself quite well throughout this affair. But his obsession with keeping the report secret has played into the hands of the TGWU right, allowing them to smear the union's Broad Left on the basis of no evidence at all. Todd should have realised that he's up against some very dirty opponents. His best bet would have been to have published the report and trusted the membership to draw their own conclusions.

## Teachers: 'You can't duck the issue of war'

By Gerry Bates

We can't put our commitment to anti-racist education to one side for the duration of this war. On the contrary, we have a duty to calm things down at school and not reflect the terrible jingoism in the popular press."

That's how Howard Roberts, National Union of Teachers executive member and secretary of Kirklees NUT, explained the tasks facing activists in his union.

Howard is well aware of the problems in our schools. Soon after war started police had to be called to a Kirklees, West Yorkshire, school after conflict broke out between two rival groups of white and Asian school students. The fighting followed an attack on a local mosque a few days earlier. "This war could be a god send to the racists," warned Howard.

There was no point in the NUT trying to duck the issues raised by war. "When you've got schoolchildren lining up to fight each other, burying your head in the sand is irresponsible. Caution simply becomes moral cowardice," added Howard.

Fellow executive member Andy Dixon echoed Howard's points.

"Some people in the leadership of the union believe it would be a disaster if we came out and campaigned against the war. They think we would lose members. I disagree. War is such an important issue it affects everybody, we can't duck it. We've got a responsibility to give a lead to our members."

"I would like to see the NUT coming out firmly against this war, not fudging the issues as the executive did last week. As far as I understand it, at our December executive meeting we voted *unanimously* for a motion that said we were opposed to war in the Gulf. So that remains our policy."

One thing is certain. The longstanding NUT ban on 'political' discussion could be finally abandoned under the impact of this war. At conference this Easter there is a big chance of committing the union to full opposition to the war.

• NUT President Barbara Lloyd was sighted on a recent 'Stop the War' demonstration in London. When asked why she was there, it is rumoured that she replied "Because it's union policy to oppose this war."

## Firefighters protest in Westminster

Firemen and women from Fall over the United Kingdom marched on the House of Commons on Tuesday 29 January to protest at cuts in Fire Service budgets.

The government's poll tax capping plans spell disaster for fire cover, particularly in South and West Yorkshire, and Derbyshire, with firefighters in those areas facing redundancy.

Fire Brigades Union general secretary Ken Cameron said:

"The government's whole strategy on poll tax and its consequent penny pinching of fire service budgets is placing the public at risk. Firefighters are being asked to bear the brunt of government cuts."

"We are bringing our protest to Westminster because that is where the blame lies — not with hard pressed local authorities — but with a government which puts profit before people."

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Teachers say: 'Stop the war!'

As teachers and as trade unionists we wish to express our deep concern at the outbreak of war in the Middle East. We support the longstanding commitment to peace by the National Union of Teachers and call for an im-

mediate end to the war in the Gulf.

Press reports indicate that the British presence in the Gulf is costing £30 million a day. We consider this a criminal waste of resources when education, health and other public services face underfunding and cuts. We oppose the threat to our children's futures posed by this destructive wars.

One consequence of the Gulf war has been the emergence of racism aimed especially at Muslim and Asian communities. We consider it vital that teachers work to eliminate racism and tension from our schools.

We regret that the Labour and trade union leadership has not opposed the war and express our intention to work to win commitment from teachers and trade unionists to the cause of peace in the Middle East.

Andy Dixon, NUT Executive  
Anita Dickinson, NUT Executive  
Barrie Frost, NUT Executive  
Nic Gavin, NUT Executive  
Dave Harvey, NUT Executive  
Mary Hufford, NUT Deputy  
General Secretary  
Ian Murch, NUT Executive  
Bernard Regan, NUT Executive  
Howard Roberts, NUT Executive  
David Roper, NUT Executive  
Marion Shirley, NUT Executive  
Mark Slater, NUT Executive  
Colin Tarrant, NUT Executive  
(All in personal capacity)

• More on page 15

### An open letter to Chris Smith MP

# Labour could have stopped this war!

Dear Chris,  
As you'll know, our GC last Wednesday (23 January) voted *unanimously* to oppose the war in the Gulf.

You're against the war too, as you said in your MP's report to that GC. Yet you have voted in Parliament with the Labour Party leadership — which means with the Tories, which means with George Bush, which means, whatever you tell yourself, *for war*.

At the GC you refused to support the call for an immediate ceasefire on the grounds that it was "not practical". Continued butchery, killing and maiming in a war you yourself call "unnecessary" is, presumably, "practical".

Such "practical" politics! No doubt it will save your job on the front bench. No doubt Neil Kinnock's kitchen cabinet believes it will allow Labour to remain patriotic and respectable and thus unhurt in the opinion polls by the war.

We doubt it. This war is going to leave a very bitter after-taste. Millions of people will be very angry about their sons, brothers, and friends being killed for the sake of Western oil interests.

They will condemn those responsible for a war which will leave the Middle East in a worse mess than ever. They will resent the lies they have been told by the media and politicians. They will demand accounts from those who did not speak out at the time.

If you and the rest of the "soft left" in the Parliamentary Labour Party had campaigned against this war, you might quite possibly have stopped it. The momentum towards war became strong as soon as the US sent large numbers of troops to the Gulf: it then could not withdraw short of war without seeming to back down. The momentum became stronger as the weeks passed. But it was not unstoppable.

There was strong feeling against war. If Labour had campaigned



If Neil Kinnock had campaigned against the war, the first demonstration would have been not five thousand, but fifty or five hundred thousand. Photo: Mark Salmon

against war, the campaign could have transformed that feeling into a *force*. And that could have made a difference.

According to the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* — both pro-war — Britain was the *only* country where there was a fairly solid majority for war before 15 January. The majority for war in public opinion was narrow; but in the "political class", in the media, and in Parliament, it was enormous.

Opinion in the US was much more divided. Congress approved the war only very narrowly. Memories of Vietnam made for sober thinking — and not only among radicals or left-wingers. Many conservatives opposed war with the calculations that the costs for American capitalism would outweigh the benefits.

Yet the decision was swung for war. And heavy among the factors giving weight to the push for war must have been the unswerving, solid, reliable support for that war drive from another country — and, as it happened, only *one* other country, Britain.

What if Britain had responded like Germany, for example — the labour opposition standing against the war, and the conservative government's support for George Bush consequently very tepid, and qualified by an eager eye to every possible get-out? War would have been much less likely.

It was within the power of the Labour Party leadership to make sure that Britain did respond in a divided, weak way to Bush's appeals for support. If Neil Kinnock had campaigned against war, the first demonstration against war would have been not five thousand

strong, but fifty or five hundred thousand.

Yet Neil Kinnock did not once divide Parliament against the Tories on the war issue. He did not once appear on television to debate against the Tories on their push to war.

The "soft left" could have changed that. The "soft left" could have told Neil Kinnock that he must choose between opposing war and seeing half his Shadow Cabinet and more than half the PLP defy him. Who knows, faced with such an ultimatum, Neil Kinnock might even have rediscovered his long-disused faculty of thinking for himself on an issue, and saying what he thought, instead of just mouthing what the PR people say will sound most safe, respectable, statesmanlike, and inoffensive.

In any case there would have been much stronger opposition than the brave stand of Tony Benn and a few others on the "hard left" and a few quiet resignations at the 13th hour by "soft lefts" (Maria Fyfe, John McFall, John Battle, Tony Banks).

It wasn't done. You and the "soft left" played "safe" — "safe" for you, that is, murderously unsafe for tens of thousands of people in the Middle East. You allowed yourselves to be fobbed off with meaningless words from Neil Kinnock and Gerald Kaufman. The words in Neil Kinnock's Parliamentary speech just before 15 January about wishing that sanctions could be given more time were weightless when combined with the clear statement that he would support the government in immediate war anyway.

The support for the government

is covered up by words about "supporting our troops" and "supporting the UN". But neither the British troops, nor the UN, decided to send British forces into the Gulf and into war. The Tory government decided that. Those who do not campaign for the withdrawal of British forces support the Tories, not the UN; and they do not "support our troops", but condemn a large number of them to death or maiming in a vicious, pointless, criminal war.

Words about "stopping the war as soon as possible" mean nothing. Norman Schwarzkopf wants that too, and sincerely. And words about the desirability of a peace conference and a just settlement *after* the war are what all warmongers say! They do not distinguish Neil Kinnock from the Tories.

It is a tragedy and a crime that Labour has been drawn so far into complicity with the bloody atrocities now unfolding in the Gulf. The Party members — we're sure Islington South is typical — never wanted to be drawn so far, and want Labour to come out against war as soon as possible. I hope you'll play a part even now by speaking out for your own views — which means speaking out against the Party leadership.

Martin Thomas  
Belinda Weaver  
Rajes Bala  
Alex Macdonald  
Simon Thorne  
Michael Butler  
Dinah Warren  
Pete Gilman  
Alan Laws  
Bruce Robinson  
Members of Islington South  
Labour Party

## Saddam's slick answer

By Les Hearn

The threat of environmental disaster in the Gulf war has already started to become the reality.

Something like a hundred million tonnes of crude oil is floating south from Kuwait and is poised not only to harm the desalination plants of Saudi Arabia (on which the people of the area, including the allied troops, depend for their drinking water).

It will destroy a delicate environment, already under pressure from the considerable economic activity in the region.

The oil slick is already some 15 times larger than the Exxon Valdez one that affected Alaska. Against that, though, is the fact that the higher temperatures in the Gulf will cause more of the oil to evaporate.

Options for getting rid of the oil include chemical dispersal (which will cause harm to sea life) or skimming it off the sea surface (never before tried on such a large scale and useless where the oil has started to sink).

Burning it is not an option because the sea water takes heat away so effectively that a fire cannot be sustained for long. Spraying with oil-digesting bacteria may help but ultimately it may just be a matter of allowing nature to take its course. This will mean that the livelihoods of fishing communities will be harmed, not to mention the many rare species in the Gulf water.

These include the dugong, a placid herbivorous sea mammal the size of a seal, dolphins and turtles. Coral reefs will also be affected by oil pollution, with serious implications for the wealth of sea life dependent on them.

If it is at all possible to protect any or all of these, such as by installing protective booms, etc, this should be done as quickly as possible. The expense, though undoubtedly great, would be but a drop in the vast bucket of war expenditure.



Where have all the flowers gone?