

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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Special Issue on the Gulf War



US and Britain Out of the Gulf

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

No 30, February 1991

Contents

UPDATE

1 ● EDITORIAL

2-3 ● Who will win the war? 4 ● Police-state racism
backs war-drive 5 ● Slick lies boost the alliance 5 ● War
could destroy our health service

6-7

Recession – not Saddam's slump but Major's crisis
Dave Palmer

7

War smokescreen hides Poll Tax failure
Don't forget Trafalgar Square

8-22

GULF SPECIAL

Labour movement must act against the war

Women fight back against war

Sam Inman

US divided on Gulf war

Terry Conway

Turkish strikers oppose war drive

Cem Izmirli

European Capitals divided on Gulf war

Gill Lee

Students rock Greek government

Alan Thornett

Always waving the bosses' flag

Pete Firmin

The fight for unity of the Arab nation

Geoff Ryan

The United Nations: Blue helmets for peace and justice?

Phil Hearse

Korea: where the US showed Saddam some dirty tricks

John Lister

23-24

Beyond Gorbachev's Baltic clampdown

David Shepherd

25-26

Now Bush comes gunning for Castro

Sam Stacey

27-28

Concession and repression in South Africa

Mike Pearce

29

Manifestos give way to mass violence

Oliver New

30

Punjab: State repression versus fundamentalism

Oliver New

31-32

REVIEW

Unstable yet durable – the paradox of Indian democracy

33 ● LETTERS



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Imperialist hands off the Middle East!

The motley bunch of governments supporting George Bush's "anti-Saddam alliance" are already in heated debate over the shape of the 'peace' they will want to impose after the Gulf War is over.

The USA has been extremely reluctant to define its final objective from the war, and simply quotes the vague United Nations resolution of November 29, which called not only for Saddam to leave Kuwait by January 15, but also for the restoration of "international peace and security in the area".

Any objective observer of US foreign interventions in the last 45 years will know that their track record of success in creating either peace or security is far from encouraging. In practice the only peace Washington is keen to see is a 'pax Americana', creating 'security' for the multinationals and bankers to continue profiteering at the expense of the 'third world'.

Previous American efforts at restoring 'peace' and 'security' in the post-war period have brought us a catalogue of brutish, corrupt - often warlike - regimes, from Syngman Rhee in South Korea to Mobutu in Zaire; from the Shah of Iran to Ferdinand Marcos; from Pinochet's Chile to the Zionist state of Israel. They have brought decades of war in Vietnam, and agonies of 'destabilisation' in Nicaragua, Angola and Mozambique. Time and again the US effort to make the world safe for 'democracy' has led to the imposition and preservation of dictatorship. Now they want to try again with the Middle East - a region constantly convulsed by crises stemming from centuries of arbitrary imposition of external imperialist 'settlements'.

It seems that George Bush is deliberately leaving himself room to interpret the UN resolution as giving the "alliance" a mandate to push beyond Kuwait and into Iraq, to oust Saddam Hussein. This is surely the only way the US can carry out its threats to deal with Saddam as a 'war criminal'. After demolishing most of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti economies, the US may hope to instal a pliable regime in the ruins of Baghdad, who can be propped up by a long-term emplacement of US/UN forces in the Gulf.

Other governments supporting the war drive clearly have different objectives: the Turkish bourgeoisie clearly hopes to carve off a slice of Iraq; the Egyptians and Syrians probably want to see Iraq cut down to size, but not demolished, for fear that this would open the way for Iran to dominate the region. The Iranians, for their part, under pressure from fundamentalists, have begun putting forward 'peace plans' and threatening to fight any attempt to dismember Iraq!

Much of European and Japanese capital, however, has been enlisted in Bush's 'alliance' largely on the level of restoring the old regime in Kuwait and 'containing' the threat to oil supplies posed by Saddam. We cannot expect these governments to be overjoyed at the idea of handing long-term effective control of such a vast percentage of oil supplies over to the USA as armed arbiters of a new 'peace' in the Gulf.

Even the Gorbachev regime, whose support for the onslaught has been purchased for \$4 billion in aid, is now shrinking from the sheer barbarism of the US attack, and the long-term damage that could be done to their diplomatic links in the Arab world.

It proved relatively easy for the US, through blackmail, bribery and

arm-twisting, to set the war machine in motion: the rows seem likely to erupt over when and how it should be stopped.

The fact is that *none* of the countries contributing to the allied war effort - least of all the USA itself - can claim any consistency in their new-found opposition to Saddam Hussein, synthetic hatred for whom now fuels the imperialist propaganda machine. Many would prefer to have Saddam - with reduced forces - continue to repress the Iraqi masses in the way he has done so effectively, rather than risk the installation of a fragile puppet regime that could trigger new waves of instability in the Middle East.

Only socialists, genuinely concerned with the liberation and defence of the Arab masses and the defeat of imperialist domination of the Middle East, have a consistent record of opposing Saddam as a brutal anti-working class dictator. We opposed him - and his bloodstained Baath Party - *before* the Iran-Iraq war, as the murderer of communists and left winger and oppressor of the Kurdish people.

We condemned Iraq's cynical role in the Iran-Iraq war, triggered by Saddam but driven on by massive aid from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, and by arms shipments and loans from the USA, France and Britain. We opposed Iraq's war against the Kurdish people long before the horror of his use of chemical weapons against them. And we opposed Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and called for the withdrawal of Kuwaiti troops, not through any affection for the wretched al-Sabah ruling family, but because the invasion gave US imperialism the pretext it wanted to dispatch vast armies to the Gulf: it now endangers the defence of Iraq itself.

Saddam remains the biggest liability in the defence of Iraq, clearly prepared to take his own country and its people up to and over the brink of ruin to fulfil his own ambitions.

There is no disagreement over whether Saddam is a despicable torturer and tyrant: the difference is over *who should remove him*, and *who should decide the fate of Iraq, the Gulf region, the Middle East and the Arab world as a whole*. It is here that socialists have nothing in common with those in the imperialist camp. We believe that the overthrow of Saddam is a task for the Iraqi people themselves, and that the security of the Middle East can only be guaranteed by the Arab masses, and not by western generals and bankers. For us the right of national self-determination is a principle to be defended, not just a useful card to play when it embarrasses the Kremlin bureaucracy.

History shows that every involvement of imperialism in carving up Middle East 'security' leads to further misery, exploitation and repression for the workers and peasants. The latest military adventure, using weapons more powerful and deadly than ever before, is already in danger of destroying the economy and the environment of the Gulf for many years to come.

That's why we make no apology for calling at one and the same time for the immediate *withdrawal* of British and US/UN troops from the Gulf, and for the *defence* of Iraq against the imperialist offensive, while we support struggles by Iraqi workers and peasants for the *removal* of Saddam Hussein, as part of the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of pro-imperialist regimes and the establishment of a socialist federation of states in the Middle East.

Who will win the war?

Only a week after the start of the Gulf war did it become possible to cut through the barrage of US propaganda and begin to make an assessment of the military course of the war and the possible political implications. ALAN DAVIES weighs up the events so far.

It is clear that initial estimates by the US alliance – that the war would be over in a few weeks – were wildly off the mark. Estimates of the duration of the air war ranged from one to five days for gaining air supremacy. One report even said three hours. These estimates were a crucial part of the US military strategy since for Bush a quick war (and a clear victory) is both a political and a military necessity.

Not only has the air war not been won in the first week, but the damage inflicted on Iraq, particularly on military targets, has been much exaggerated. Some allied planes have been attacking cardboard cutouts of missile launchers, and it is now accepted that the destruction of all Iraqi airfields is impossible because of their size, number, camouflage and 1.5 metres-thick concrete covers for the aircraft – which were built by the British. Even the alliance now claims to have destroyed only 30 of Iraq's 700 aircraft.

Damage has clearly been sustained in the infrastructure of the economy, (electricity, water and communications); but the extent of this seems well short of disaster level as we go to press. Water pressure is reduced in Baghdad but it is still flowing in the taps, electricity has been restricted but may still be available. The telephone system is working in some areas and Bagh-

dad radio continues to broadcast.

Iraqi reports of casualties are also low, still under 300 – 41 of these civilians, though for some tactical reason they appear to be deliberately minimising the civilian death toll, which according to refugees interviewed in Jordan must be much higher than the government admits. It is easy to see why military casualties should be concealed, but there is little reason for Saddam to withhold details of civilian casualties which have worldwide propaganda value, not least the reported bombing of schools and hospitals. If there were very big civilian casualties, Iraq would surely want to use this to refute unsupported and doubtful US claims of "clinical" bombing accuracy and restriction to military targets.

If the reports of relatively low casualties are true, this points to a highly developed system of hardened shelters available to the population and adequate warnings of attacks. These probably date from the Iran/Iraq war and have been extended in the last six months.

The most important military reality which has now been recognised by the USA is that they failed quickly to destroy the Iraqi air force, and that their air power is ineffective against deeply dug-in troops. These factors alter the course of the war, since the US strategy for a land assault has been to ensure that it is undertaken under conditions of air supremacy, after the defending forces have been seriously damaged by air attack. In some ways they mean that the real war has not yet begun.

The prospect of a land assault against defensive positions which are largely intact – and the possibility of Iraqi air attacks against US and coalition forces advanc-



US: worried about land war

ing in the open – is the worst possible option. It would involve the biggest tank battle in history, with combined armies of over a million on the Kuwaiti front alone. Alliance forces are clearly not prepared for such battles, as shown by reports that some British armour is already bogged down and lost in the desert before the war has even started.

Massive casualties in tank engagements are absolutely inevitable under those conditions, and there is no certainty that the US could win. Generally accepted military strategy sees a three to one advantage as necessary for a ground attack against defensive positions. The US does not have this advantage. Ultimately they could win, of course, in a military sense. But the crucial question is whether they could win before political opposition became unstoppable? And if they were to win after such mass slaughter, what would be the new shape of the Middle East, and what would be the level of opposition to a US presence?

The start of the war, and the claimed victories, has increased support for the war in the main combat countries – US, Britain and to a lesser extent France, where there are clear divisions in

the ruling class. But elsewhere opinion is already moving in the other direction – such as in Italy where opposition to the war is 80%.

In Britain, although public support for the war is strong at the present time this could evaporate quite quickly. The anti-war movement is developing fast, and even the craven support for the war shown by the Labour leadership could soon be challenged. 34 Labour MPs are opposing the war, and there have been four front bench resignations on the issue.

There is no serious possibility, at this stage, that the bombing campaign will turn the Iraqi population against Saddam. At the present time support for him and the war effort is clearly increasing, as usually happens with air bombing. The population is being rapidly politicised into a wider understanding of the implications of the war for the region. The attacks on Israeli cities are highly popular and seen as direct support for the Palestinians. These factors may change if the US bombing caused a complete breakdown of Iraqi society, but this is not the case at the present time.

The prospect of a protracted



US troops: massive casualties inevitable

war holds other major problems for the US alliance. They have picked the best climatic conditions for what they saw as a short war. From now on, conditions can only get worse, with rain at the moment, sand storms in February and March and then the temperature rising to intolerable levels. A tank war in such conditions would be something of unimaginable brutality. The medical authorities are already predicting that they will be overwhelmed by casualties, and are preparing mass graves for the dead.

At the same time Iraqi trench defences are being recognised as more effective than previously thought. They are very deep and some are hardened – particularly command posts, ammunition dumps and tank emplacements. US surveillance is less effective, and possibilities of camouflage are more effective, than previously thought.

Munitions are being expended in the Gulf at a level which may not be sustainable. With up to 3,000 sorties a day, likely to increase if cloud cover lifts, shortages may arise quite quickly. High-tech missiles in particular can only be produced at a fraction of the rate they are being used up, even with the factories on maximum overtime (leaving aside the economic effects of their cost). The first four days of the war cost Britain £100 million and Major is now forced to admit that the £500 million they put forward for the war is totally inadequate. The five Tornados lost to date cost £16

million each. Already it is clear that this will have a major impact on the budget.

Iraq's medium-tech army is easier to maintain and supply. Iraq has its own huge arms industry, built up during the war with Iran, which can supply most of its needs, and an engineering industry closely integrated into it.

The economic effects of the war are clearly massive. It could push the world into massive new recession: the US is already talking about putting up taxes to pay for the war which is now costing them \$1 billion a day. The cost of the hardware being expended is absolutely enormous. It costs £500,000 to launch a Patriot missile, and 40 were launched in one attack. A top US strike aircraft costs \$72 million and an M1 tank \$4.4 million.

The Scud attacks on Israel and Saudi Arabia are clearly of political more than military significance. But the Scuds have taken the war outside of Iraq, forced the deployment of expensive defences, and created a political problem though deploying Patriot missiles in Israel which in a sense draws them into the war.

Syria has already objected, saying that the deployment alters the military balance in the region, and that the Patriots will eventually be used against Arabs. At the same time the US has prevented Israel from striking back with air power by denying them the identification codes used by alliance aircraft.

The alarm of Arab govern-

ments which are a part of the alliance has also been increased by the intervention of Turkey, through the use of its bases to attack northern Iraq. Iran and Syria have raised the possibility that Turkey may attempt to take over part of Iraq in the event of its defeat. The Iranian Foreign Minister has said that this could lead to an Iranian declaration of war against Turkey. They suspect that Turkey wants to take over Mosul and Kirkuk, two oil-rich provinces from Turkey which were incorporated into Iraq by Britain in 1926.

The Iranian government, under pressure from fundamentalists for its connivance in the war, has made proposals to try to end it via an Islamic solution, and has called for a conference of Islamic leaders.

Most governments of Islamic countries or countries with Islamic minorities, are now under pressure from their populations who are increasingly supporting Iraq against the US. Egypt's Mubarak and Assad have hinted at a conference of Middle East governments to call for a cease fire.

The government of Pakistan, which has 10,000 troops in the Gulf, is under massive pressure from the population and faces imminent collapse over the issue if the contingent is not withdrawn. There have been massive demonstrations and strikes – notably in Islamabad and Lahore – against the war, some organised by the youth wing of the ruling party. Tens of thousands have

volunteered to fight for Iraq, and are demanding to be allowed to go to the front.

There have also been demonstrations in Bangladesh, where 1,000 have signed up to go to the front. Anti-war demonstrations have broken out in India, which has a Muslim minority of 100 million. In Malaysia, where demonstrations are banned, thousands are signing up to fight for Iraq. In South Africa, Muslims are asking to be allowed to join the war.

Iraq's strategy is clearly to fight a protracted war of attrition. Saddam Hussein made it clear before the war started that Iraqi troops would be dug in deep, that there would be nothing above ground, that the air strikes would be ineffective and that when the land war started the Iraqi army would be intact and ready to fight. So far this is emerging as essentially correct.

All this says is that a US victory is no longer guaranteed. Indeed, the possibility exists for a political and military catastrophe for the USA, where Bush hinged his whole appeal on the pledge the war 'would not become another Vietnam'. Yet a land war with tens of thousands of casualties now looks certain, and political support for this in the US may well be impossible to sustain.

Failure to defeat Iraq would put the US back where it was after Vietnam – facing a massive loss of credibility, and its imperialist foreign policy crippled by a population not prepared to go to war.

Police-state racism backs war-drive

In any war, the consolidation of 'public opinion' through positive propaganda for the 'patriotic' cause and negative propaganda whipping up hostility to the 'enemy' is extremely important.

A significant aspect of the Tory war drive is the image constructed in the media, of the Iraqis in particular, but of people from the Middle East in general – and especially Palestinians.

Since the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, the Tories have made a number of changes to immigration policy concerning people from the Middle East. Kuwaiti nationals who were resident in this country on August 2 can apply for 'exceptional leave to remain' here for six months, and this is now likely to be further extended. Needless to say, there is no special policy for people from other countries in the region.

Since September 22, Iraqi nationals have been prevented from entering the UK unless they have British citizenship or citizenship of another EC member state. On January 18 the rules were further tightened, so that Iraqi nationals will not be granted extensions of existing visas, while those with limited leave to remain will have to register with the police.

Iraqi people do have the right to apply for political asylum, but given that some known opponents of the Ba'ath regime have already been deported, their prospects of success are not good.

23 Iraqis were expelled last September, and another 67 issued with notices of intention to deport on January 3. They were given a week in which to leave or to make representations against this.

Since January 15, hundreds of people from the Middle East have been rounded up by the police, with no notice, under a clause in the Immigration Act which deals

with the question of 'national security'.

Most of the detainees have been held in Pentonville jail, in appalling conditions, but are soon to be transferred to Full Sutton, a security prison in rural Yorkshire. The move will make it more difficult for relatives, friends and legal advisers to stay in touch in what is obviously an extremely distressing situation for all concerned.

Some deportations have already taken place, while there are also fears that other people will be held essentially as internees for the duration of the conflict.

People detained in this way have very few rights: the state doesn't have to justify the grounds on which it has made its judgement. There is a 'right of appeal' – but only to the Immigration Appellate authorities, a tribunal which is unlikely to meet for at least 6 weeks, whose recommendations are only advisory, and which in general has found against those appealing.

Many of the individuals involved have lived in Britain for many years, and certainly some of the Iraqis are political dissidents who left their country because of opposition to Saddam. It is particularly ironic that many Palestinians are faced with deportation – when they have no homeland to go to. Several cases have been taken to the High Court – to no avail – despite the real danger that some face in returning to the Middle East. People are being criminalised on the basis of their nationality.

These actions by the state dovetail perfectly with the attitude of the media. The tabloids have obviously continued and escalated their usual racist filth, with particular emphasis on anti-Arab stereotypes, and have also



John Harris NUJ

British anti-war movement must fight deportations

pushed the patriotic images. The flags, both British and American, have played a particularly prominent role, notably the hideous *Sun* cover on January 15.

But what has been in some ways more telling is the response of the 'serious' media. Despite the lack of 'hard news' on the war itself with which to fill the endless hours of television coverage, there has been very little information about the detentions and deportations. One newsbroadcast had the result of a High Court appeal after (or perhaps as part of?) the sports news.

On the other hand there is a constant dialogue about the Muslim community in Britain (which is incorrectly completely conflated with the Arab community) playing up the possible tension between support for Islam and support for British imperialism.

The fact that most Muslims condemn the imperialist war is seen as a contradiction which brings at least implicitly into question their right to be here, or at least to be treated as anything other than pariahs.

In the USA, the whole anti-war movement is already portrayed as 'the enemy within', as traitors. So far, the concentration in Britain has been on the 'difficult' position of the Muslim/Arab community, though it is obviously a short step from this position to one of attacking anyone who opposes the war.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that there have been increasing attacks on people perceived to be of Arab origin, and also against mosques. These developments have been apparent since August, but have escalated within the last few weeks.

When casualties amongst British forces in the Gulf increase, as they inevitably will, the hysteria in the media and on the streets will undoubtedly rise still further.

It is vital that the anti-war movement takes up these issues and demands that the labour movement fights the growing tide of racism which is accompanying the imperialist war drive.

Terry Conway

Slick lies boost the alliance

Truth is not only the first casualty of war: it is put through a thousand agonies at the hands of propagandists. And no lie goes down as well as a really *big* lie.

So we should not be too surprised that the screeching headlines about Saddam's alleged 'environmental terrorism' following the major oil leakage in Kuwait turned out to be an elaborate fabrication, and a fairly effective ploy to win naive 'green' elements away from the anti-war movement.

Far from Saddam having turned on the pumps to create the huge oil slick polluting the Gulf, the *Observer* revealed on January 27 that the leak was the result of an *American* bombing strike against the Kuwaiti terminal – and that in the process, the US planes damaged a British

submarine hiding beneath one tanker, and nearly killed agents of the Special Boat Squadron swimming on a secret operation underwater!

For many who have closed their minds to the human tragedy being caused by the massive allied bombing of Iraqi cities and military targets, the emotive pictures of cormorants and other wild life in the Gulf caught up in the oil slick was able to stir up anger and hostility against the alleged culprit – Saddam.

As the actual perpetrators of the disaster, and with much of Vietnam still suffering the prolonged ecological dislocation from the systematic and deliberate US raids to defoliate its forests, it ill-behaves anyone in the State Department to denounce anyone else for "environmental terrorism".



John Harris NUJ

Media lies attempt to confuse activists

In fact the war – and the oil slick, possibly even bigger than the many already created by US oil corporations around the globe – *does* threaten long-lasting environmental damage to the Gulf, which has already suffered the consequences of the Iran-Iraq war. As a relatively shallow, closed sea, the Gulf is especially vulnerable to pollution.

How cynical, therefore, of the US forces to bomb Kuwaiti oil installations – part of the in-

frastructure of the very country they are supposed to be liberating! The US forces are clearly sticking to the letter of the statement by the Kuwaiti royal family who insisted – from the seclusion of a luxury hotel thousands of miles from the fighting – they would be happy to see their country reduced to rubble, so long as Saddam is driven out and they can take over again.

War could destroy our health service

Tens of thousands of hospital workers will come under intense pressure as soon as the ground war gets under way in the Gulf, and the flow of casualties begins.

Management have been preparing to implement 'Operation Granby', a detailed package of proposals to make up to 7,500 NHS hospital beds available to military casualties from the Gulf. But the plans raise as many questions as they try to answer.

The Granby plan covers only *five days* of ground war, because planners have assumed the war would be over within this space of time. There is *no* provision for the creation of further space if it continues and the casualty count is higher than anticipated.

It also deals only with *beds*, making no proposals for the additional staffing that will be required in order to care for the

severely ill casualties. While most health regions and districts have hundreds of beds closed for lack of cash, others have closed them for lack of nursing staff: and though some extra nurses might be expected to respond to an appeal to help care for war casualties, it is by no means certain that sufficient numbers of staff with the right qualifications would be available.

It is likely that existing staff will be pressurised to cancel holidays, and work long hours of overtime: others will be diverted from their usual wards to care for the wounded, leaving NHS services in chaos.

Another huge question mark hangs over the issue of funding: ministers have told NHS managers that they should spend money as necessary to care for the casualties, and claim it back later. Yet anyone with any ex-

perience of this government's attitude to the NHS will think twice before believing that a blank cheque is really on offer: the likelihood is that districts and regions will find themselves lumbered with huge debts, forcing even more rounds of cuts in services.

The arrival of large numbers of severely burned and otherwise badly injured troops could stretch every aspect of health provision to the limit: the Bradford football stadium fire a few years ago was enough to exhaust all blood supplies in the North of England. 7,500 Gulf casualties could strain the Blood Transfusion Service to breaking point.

At each point management will be pressurising health workers, many of whom oppose the war, to make sacrifices as 'professionals', while the health unions, like the rest of the labour

movement, stay tactfully silent on the issues.

In some hospitals, health workers against the war have begun to organise ad-hoc meetings to discuss the issues, and show that while they will not refuse to treat patients they do not support the Tory war effort. Successful meetings and protests have been held in Oxford, Manchester and at the London Hospital.

It is important that similar initiatives spread to other hospitals, getting the message over to the public that while the government prepares to pour limitless funds into the Gulf war-chest, the war effort could mean an end to most routine medical treatment. The old slogan of 'beds, not bombs' has never been more appropriate.

Harry Sloan

Recession – not Saddam's slump but Major's crisis!

by Dave Palmer

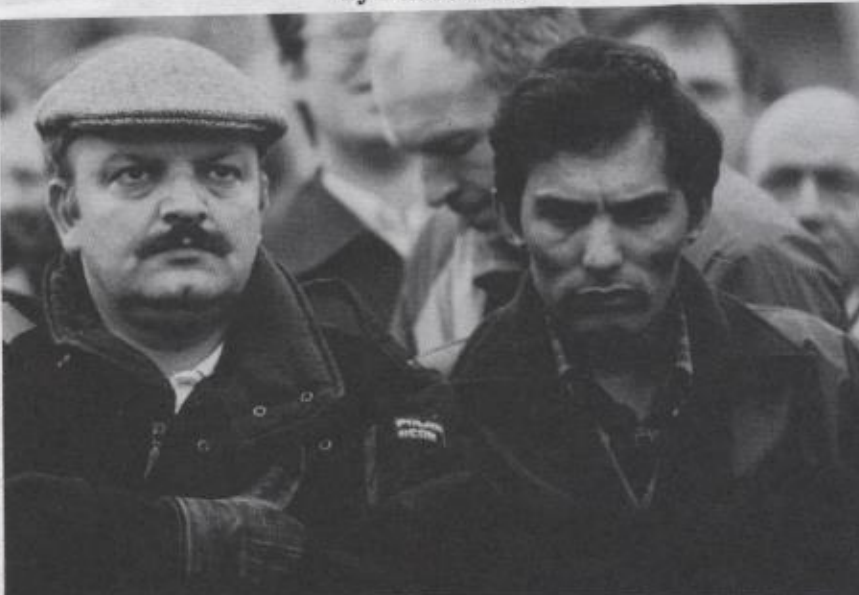
The world economy is now entering the third major recession since 1945. War in the Gulf though it has initially reduced oil prices, could yet provide the third major oil shock. Britain, as the weakest of the major capitalist economies, has been the earliest to enter a downturn. In 1990 the UK had the highest inflation, lowest growth and largest current account deficit in the EC, and 1991 commenced with the British economy deep in recession.

A record 500 businesses a week are now going bust in the UK. The economy peaked in April 1990, and industrial output has been falling ever since. GDP fell by 1.2% in the third quarter of 1990, the sharpest contraction since the early 1980s. Recession will be declared 'officially' (the standard definition is two quarters negative growth) when figures for the last quarter of 1990 are released.

Profits have undergone their sharpest quarterly decline since 1981. Many 'highly geared' (heavily borrowed) companies are finding difficulty financing their levels of debt from a falling cash flow. The domestic economy is now begging for interest rate cuts, but the need to maintain parity within the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) makes this impossible. The pound sits at the bottom of its ERM band, meaning interest rates can only be cut with a devaluation.

The December unemployment figures rose by 57,000, their steepest monthly rise since the slump of the 1979-80. Analysts expect the total will top 2 million by April, and continue to increase until well into 1992. Given the fact that these official figures are fiddled, you should add another 1 million to get the real figure. Last time round the recession took until 1984 for unemployment to peak.

The initial impact of the slump appears to be the reverse of that in 1980-81 when UK manufacturing capacity was decimated with the North, Midlands and Scotland worst hit. The 1980s were characterised by huge growth of the service sector relative to manufacturing.



British Aerospace workers oppose threat to jobs

John Harris NUJ

Services now employ three times more people than manufacturing (though the relative share of total domestic expenditure on services and manufactured goods has remained constant).

Now it is those regions in which 1980s growth was fastest – the South-East, South-West and East Anglia – and sectors which expanded most – financial services, construction, retailing and media – that have felt the first impact of falling demand. High interest rates and the high pound are bearing down on the competitiveness of exports, meaning that job losses are now spreading to manufacturing industry. The downturn has been most acute amongst firms producing investment goods such as computers, machine tools goods and those making hi-tech consumer goods.

The claims for Thatcherism's success in restructuring the UK economy rest upon two main indices. Productivity increased sharply relative to other major capitalist economies; this is almost certainly due job losses, raising the level of exploitation and the massive scrapping of less efficient capacity in the previous slump – 'leaner and fitter' has also meant smaller. And in 1988-89, at 19.3% company profits hit their highest level since the early 1960s – in this sense Thatcher served her class impeccably.

But Thatcher's administration also saw the re-emergence in an intensified form of the problems caused by the chronically low levels of investment in manufacturing capacity in the UK economy.

During the 'boom' of 1985-89 Lawson's deregulation of the financial sector, easy mortgages and consumer credit, and tax cuts

created excess demand with which domestic output could not keep up. This provided the perfect conditions for businesses to raise prices in order to increase profits. Foreign imports filled the gap between expenditure and domestic output.

The result, as soaring demand outstripped stuttering domestic supply, was rapidly rising inflation and the huge trade deficit. Large real wage rises as the economy peaked were largely the result of chronic skills shortages in key sectors. The current account deficit reached 3.75% of GDP., forcing up interest rates to

attract the 'hot money' on international capital markets required to finance the deficit.

Thatcherism has left UK manufacturing industry too anaemic for the current account deficit to be closed without years of slow growth. Unemployment which never fell below 1.6 million in the 1980s, is again being deployed as the main weapon to control inflation. The share of manufacturing in GDP is lower than in any other major industrial country. Investment in British productive capacity remained constantly weak during the 1980s. Manufacturing's share of gross fixed capital formation fell from an already low 18% in 1979 to a mere 13% by 1988.

Now the 'hard money' Bundesbank regulates monetary policy in the EC; but the UK's inflation rate is almost three times that of Germany's. To maintain the parity of the pound against the Deutschmark the Bank of England has to maintain a high interest rate which makes up the difference.

Between 1970 and 1990 sterling fell from eleven Deutschmarks to the pound to just under three. The rising differential between the productivity of the two economies was compensated for by a falling pound. The government entered the ERM at a high 'anti-inflationary' rate against the Deutschmark. ERM membership requires that labour costs – real wages adjusted for changes in efficiency – do not rise. ERM entry pressures manufacturers to cut unit labour costs to boost international competitiveness. The 'choice' has become between either a fall in real wages or massive job losses.

At present wages are rising at 10% a year and, as investment is curtailed, productivity is falling. Unit labour costs are now rising by more than 12%. Manufacturing costs can only be kept down by keeping down real wages. Maintaining ERM parity means years of low growth and a massive attack on working class living standards, irrespective of the present recession.

Recession is government policy – it is the Tories only known cure for the ‘hangover’ from the expansionary period of the Thatcher years from which they have learnt nothing. As Major said in his first speech as Chancellor, “If it isn’t hurting, it isn’t working.” The question is whether a full scale slump can be avoided – it was the return to the Gold Standard in 1931 which precipitated the Great Slump. It was the sharp appreciation of the exchange rate due to high North Sea oil output which wreaked havoc on manufacturing output in the early 1980s. Maintaining ERM parity could have a similar effect this time round. Major and Lamont have clearly decided to avoid devaluation at all costs. Rapidly increasing unemployment is again being used as the main device to discipline the working class and control inflation.

For the working class and labour movement conditions are bound to become more difficult – rising unemployment always weakens the ability of working class to struggle at the economic level. The institutionalisation of high unemployment and massive redistribution from poor to rich in the 1980s meant that the living standards of the poorest 20 percent stayed static; now increasing levels of mass poverty are a certainty.

Meanwhile the international banking system is in its worst shape since the 1930s. The situation is potentially much worse in Japan than the USA. Not only has the Japanese stock market collapsed but the stupendous Japanese land values (The Japanese Imperial Palace is on paper worth more than California) are going soft. Japanese banks are now by far the most powerful of the world’s financial institutions, but around 30% of their loans are tied up in domestic property, and they have had to rapidly raise their provision for writing off bad loans and have cutback sharply on their level of lending – the main source of liquidity in international financial markets. If any collapse, the withdrawal of Japanese capital from the international banking system could have a catastrophic impact.

Lastly, if the Gulf War brings a hike in the oil price, this would have an at present unquantifiable impact on prices and output. With the world economy in such a fragile condition the potential for fully fledged depression is high. Western politicians would then no doubt offload blame onto the Iraqi regime – we easily could be looking forward to the ‘Saddam slump’ – indeed the Tories already seem to be desperately looking to the Gulf for an alibi.



Graeme Cookson

Heseltine has delivered nothing

War smokescreen hides Poll Tax failure

One extremely positive aspect of the Gulf war as far as the Tory leadership is concerned is that it distracts attention from the Poll Tax crisis. Michael Heseltine’s announcement of next year’s figures had scarcely any attention in the media – which was a relief to the man who provoked Thatchers downfall on the basis of a radical rethink but has so far delivered nothing.

Further than that, they are able to argue that the cost of the war effort severely limits the amount of extra money that can be put into the poll tax budget. At one level, of course, this is actually true – the war is costing a fortune – and at the minute with public opinion behind the patriotic effort of ‘our boys’ in the Gulf, this is a useful excuse for the Tories.

But they are treading an extremely precarious tightrope. The fact is that even without the extra spending on the war, their economic and political room for manoeuvre on the tax was very limited.

And as the war continues, and British and allied casualties in the Gulf rise dramatically, it will become more and more difficult to hold the line. At the same time, mass non-payment continues to hold firm, and when next year’s enormous bills actually start to come through people’s doors, the poll tax movement will reap the benefit and Major’s popularity will be shaken from this angle, as well as assaulted by the anti-war movement.

It is clear that the average poll tax bill will be around £400 and that is after substantial cuts in many places. Many people will be faced with an increased poll tax bill and severe reduction in local services through cuts. In Strathclyde, next years poll tax is around £440, an increase of 27%, and cuts of £75 million are also being proposed. Lothian’s bills will be £584, an increase of 35% – hardly likely to do much for the Tories popularity.

While building the anti-war movement and taking the fight against jingoism deep into the labour movement is the primary task for all socialists at the moment, at the same time it is important to continue to build the anti-poll tax movement. The national demonstration on March 23rd, timed to coincide with the setting of local poll tax levels, has the potential to be enormous. Lets make sure it is.

Don’t forget Trafalgar Square

10 months ago, on 31 March 1990, the most magnificent mobilisation against the Tories hated poll tax took place. The police mounted a vicious assault on the demonstration and mass arrests resulted.

Since that time, the trials of those arrested have been taking place, starting with those on least serious charges. So far, 4 people are currently serving prison sentences (all 2 years) and one person is still on remand and many have received, and served, much shorter terms. It is extremely likely that most of those still to be processed will receive pretty hefty prison sentences – although one important acquittal has taken place in a case where the police evidence had just one hole too many in it for the magistrate.

The Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign, set up after the 31 March demonstration, has ensured that each court case has been monitored, organised pickets outside many and fed information back into the anti-poll tax movement.

There have often been tensions between the TSDC and particularly the leadership of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, but the TSDC now has an impressive list of sponsors now, both from the anti-poll tax movement itself and also from across the labour movement as a whole.

It is always difficult to make sure that those who are victimised for participating in collective action – be it demonstrations or strikes or other protests – are not isolated from the movement by the way that the state punishes them, that they receive our full support. But it is vital that the anti-poll tax movement and the broader labour movement takes this responsibility seriously.

Labour movement must act against the Tory War

When the General Council of the TUC met on 23 January to discuss the situation in the Gulf not one resolution was moved in support of even a ceasefire. This is vivid testament to the craven bi-partisanship of the leadership of the labour movement, with Willis and Co following directly in the footsteps of the Labour front bench.

But at the base of the labour movement, the situation is very different. Many workers, particularly those directly affected on the job, such as health workers and teachers, are angry and concerned both about the war itself and the line of their leadership.

Such sentiments will spread as the war continues, and its costs, both here and in the Gulf become more and more obvious. There

is an opportunity to take a whole variety of initiatives – inviting speakers from local anti-war committees to workplace or trade union meetings, setting up trade union and workplace groups, organising contingents on marches, and much more.

A few national unions have taken a stand; MSF sponsors the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, and the FBU and SOGAT have called for an immediate ceasefire, and a peace conference which includes discussion of the Palestinian issue, as well as more problematic demands for a UN peace keeping force. The issue must be taken up in every union at both local and national level and the leadership held to account.

While we don't actually have a coalition government, to watch Her majesty's Loyal Opposition perform, you would think we did,

Kinnock clearly doesn't recognise that if people want to see warmongers in power, the Tories are always better at it than Labour.

But again the leadership hasn't had it all its own way. There have been four front bench resignations, and opposition from the majority of Labour MEPs. The number of local parties opposed to the war drive has been growing ever since Annual Conference last October. Many are participating in local anti-war groups and organising public meetings.

Those involved in the anti-war movement must fight to take opposition to the imperialist slaughter deep into the Labour movement. We must make it clear that neither the Tories nor the leadership of the Labour movement have a right to pursue their barbaric war in our name.

Women fight back against the war

Working with Women Against War in the Gulf (WAWG) has been a massive breath of fresh air for many women. Since its formation in October WAWG has been busy establishing a national network of women anti-war activists. As with the broader anti-war movement, it has been in the new year that the blossoming has begun in earnest.

Socialist feminists active around Women for Socialism recognised very early on the importance of the gender division within society over the question of war. Quite obviously it was correct to try and orientate the embryonic anti-war movement towards this important division.

Back in October there was a great deal of sectarianism between various different elements of the existing anti-war movement. We saw doing work on the ground as more important at this stage than allowing a repetition of the bickering and factionalism that has plagued the British left for decades. So, WAWG was born.

In any war, the general rule is that it is the men who go off and do the fighting and the women are left to pick up the pieces. In wartime, the burdens on working class women increase dramatically. WAWG is in the process of establishing links with support groups – like the Gulf Mum's Support Group. Many women who have relatives in the forces are very worried about the war. Obviously they do not want to see their husbands/sons/brothers dying for a war that they are quite cynical about.

Building bridges between us and those women is absolutely vital to broadening out the anti-war movement and bringing into action working class communities.

This work is particularly important at the local/community level. Also important is to do work against conscription. The war is almost certainly going to be long, and bloody especially when the ground fighting starts. Conscription papers have already been printed – they will be mainly served to young working class men who will be used as cannon fodder for the imperialists.

Another important aspect of WAWG's activity is the fight against racism. Work around the deportations of Iraqi, Palestinian and other peoples of the Middle Eastern origin (under the 1971 Immigration Act), and work around the increasing number of racist attacks against the

Black and Asian communities, is crucial in linking the anti-war movement here with the anti-imperialist actions that are happening throughout the semi-colonial world. It is vital that the anti-war movement takes steps to defend black people in Britain against the likely escalation of racism. Labour Party Black Sections and Community organisations have been mobilising against the war from the outset. *The Voice* has also been opposing the war.

WAWG's recipe for success is that it has never sought to impose rigid schemas for activity. It acts as a network, stressing that the need is to get a flow of information from activist to activist. In some areas WAWG groups have been established; in other areas Women for Peace in the Gulf groups have been set up; in other areas women are happy to work as individual within their local campaign. WAWG has weekly meetings, open to all women, on Tuesdays at Wesley House in London and an emergency national meeting of all women opposed to the war has been called jointly by WAWG and the Women's Peace Vigil (outside the Foreign Office) for February 3 – again in Wesley House.

Far from dividing the anti-war movement, as some on the left have accused us, WAWG is actively encouraging every one opposed to the war to work together to build a broad united and democratic anti-war movement. The key to democracy is to actively encourage participation.

WAWG is asking for this year's International Women's Day (the 80th anniversary) to be a day for Peace and International sisterhood. Activists are planned in various local areas – contact WAWG for more details. A newsletter is being produced with information about what is happening and where – again contact WAWG for more details.

Finally we need *money*, for leaflets, posters and newsletter. So far we have been operating with none of the resources of the wider anti war movement and although money is starting to come in we do need more. Raise affiliation to WAWG in your Labour Party ward, Trade union branch and local committee/campaign.

WAWG can be contacted: c/o 63 Upper Tollington Park, London, N4 4DD Tel: 071 272 7649

Emergency national meeting of Women opposed to the war: Sunday 3 February 11am-2pm Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2

US divided on Gulf war

The American ruling class is clearly the major force behind the War in the Gulf, yet there have been more obvious divisions there than in Britain about precisely what course to follow. TERRY CONWAY looks at the reasons for these differences and what they are likely to mean for the course of the war and the development of the anti-war movement.

On 12 January, both houses of the US Congress approved resolutions under the War Powers Act of 1973 giving Bush authority to launch the war against Iraq. In the House of Representatives the margin was 250-183 and in the Senate 52-47. The terms of the debate were clearly tactical, with all the resolutions that were put forward supporting the embargo and the 'right' of the US to intervene militarily.

Similar discussions took place last year, most obviously in the testimonies made before the Senate Armed Services Committee in late November, where a number of former military and government officials urged Bush to give sanctions more time to work.

These splits are clearly about means, rather than ends, and reflect the precarious position of US imperialism in the world today. And the characters in the play partly reflect different assessments of the stakes and the balance of forces, and partly different and competing particular interests within the overall scenario.

The economic costs of the war are already astronomical and could easily climb to over \$100 billion, a dangerous situation for an economy already deeply in trouble. On the other hand, particular sectors of US capital may well benefit. The US oil giants consider the Gulf crisis the 'most promising opportunity in a decade to influence critical decisions on how and where the United States will meet its energy needs ... and to reverse what it considers excessive sensitivity to the environment'. (*News York Times Business section*, 19 August 1990).

Days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the oil industry intensified lobbying efforts to drill in environmentally protected and ecologically sensitive areas. As a result, the Senate approved an amendment to open up lands for exploration that were previously off limits, including the Arctic National Wildlife

Refuge in Alaska, resulting in loud protests from environmental groups.

There are difficulties for other sectors of the economy, even where the war calls for increases in production. The rate of use of high-tec weaponry so far in the air war has been enormous, and it is not at all obvious that production can keep pace with use. This was one reason why at least key sectors of the US ruling class were banking on the air war being won swiftly – something that clearly hasn't happened.

But the consequences of what looks sure now to be a prolonged military conflict are not only economic, but political. The anti-war movement, before one shot was fired in anger, was already mobilising the sort of numbers brought out only at the height of the Vietnam War, long after the body bags had started to come home. While it is true, and not surprising that public opinion has swung more firmly behind Bush since Jan 15, nevertheless the mobilisations against the war remain impressive, and their potential still greater.

When the news broke on US television that Bush had decided to launch the war, 30,000 protesters blocked San Francisco's Bay Bridge. On 19 January, 75,000 marched in San Francisco, 20,000 in Los Angeles and 15,000 in Washington. On 26 January demonstrations of over 150,000 people took place both in Washington and San Francisco. The marches were youthful, with large numbers of students and of Vietnam veterans, and significant contingents from the Central America and Palestine Solidarity movements and from the lesbian and gay and black communities. On the Washington march, there were marchers behind banners from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers union, the United Electrical Workers, the Service Employees International Union and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

The disproportionate involvement of Black people in the armed forces is already an issue: many in the Afro-American community understand that a larger number of blacks will die in Bush's war, as they did in Vietnam. While representing only 12% of the population, black people make up over 30% of the ground troops sent to guard Saudi Arabia's oil fields.

Bush meanwhile painfully underscored



the reality of 'american democracy' for black people by his veto of the 1990 Civil Rights Act. These issues were taken up in the debate by among others, Democratic Congressman Major Owens who said 'These are the same people who are penalised when President Bush refuses to pass a civil rights bill because it has a quota – he claims it has a quota. There is some kind of ugly reverse quota operating when 33% of the troops on the front line are poor and African American'.

It was because of his acute awareness of growing dissent, that Bush on 30 November tried to portray his big stick as an olive branch when he vowed 'to go the extra mile for peace' before crossing the line in the sand.

There have been debates too, on the likely military course of the war. Sam Nunn, chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and one of the movers of a resolution in the House on 12 January, which argued for the continuation of sanctions, expressed concern on this question.

'...No one can say whether war will last five days, five weeks or five months. We know we can win and we will win. No doubt about that.

Our policy and our military planning, however, cannot be based on an expectation that the war will be concluded quickly and easily.

So while Bush gained his majority on 12 January, and currently has the majority of the 'American public' behind his war, the situation is full of difficulties and dangers. While in no way giving credence to the motives of those who would have attacked the people of Iraq, the Middle East and the whole of the 'Third World' with continued economic sanctions, the anti-war movement must be alert to exploit every division in ruling class for our own ends – the stopping of this bloody war.

Turkish strikers oppose war drive

by Cem Izmirli

Turkey is now involved in the Gulf War with the roar of US warplanes leaving Incirlik air base every day on bombing sorties to Iraq. Soon a 200,000 strong Turkish army could be engaged in a land offensive on Iraq's northern border. However as in Egypt and Syria, the Turkish government's determination to drag its people into this war is in conflict with popular opinion.

In January, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated for peace in Istanbul and Iskenderun, and in every major province on 25 and 26 January.

Clashes with police and troops are still going on in which the police are reported to have opened fire on crowds, killing at least one man and injuring many. Details of this recent uprising have been suppressed by the current censorship in the British media.

The peculiarity of the anti-war opposition in Turkey is its class character: unlike the religion-inspired movements throughout the Middle East, it has emerged out of a wave of industrial action by workers.

There was of course a significant anti-war feeling and an opposition to the government's wamongering role from the very beginning of the Gulf crisis, within every layer of society, which was expressed even by the far-right president's right wing rival, Süleyman Demirel: "Our president is turning us into an American aircraft carrier".

There had also been anti-imperialist student unrest since November last year when a sixteen year old girl was arrested and threatened with 24 years imprisonment for writing anti-war slogans on a school wall. But these initial responses to the imperialist war drive spread around the country to develop into a mass movement only after 48,000 miners in Zonguldak went on strike on 1st December in the biggest all-out industrial action in Turkey since the 1980 coup d'état.

The miners main demand was for a decent living wage. Average monthly earnings are currently 400,000 lira (£70), even lower than those of South African miners who are considered to be one of the most oppressed and exploited sections of the world proletariat. They also demand safety in mines, where three thousand have died in accidents over the last 10 years. The average life expectancy of a Zonguldak miner is 47 years.

President Ozal's initial response to the miners' demands was very similar to that of

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DIRENECEK



A victory for one is a victory for all

Thatcher's hard line against the British miners' strike in 1984. He denounced the action as being illegal and threatened pit closures. About 10,000 troops and police have been sent in from other provinces.

The Miners are not alone!

However this provocative position has only deepened the unpopularity of the government and of Ozal in particular, and solidarity with the miners' strike has quickly become a symbol for political opposition. Nearly all of Turkey's two million unionised workers boycotted work on January 3, ignoring the constitutional ban on general strikes and solidarity strikes imposed by the Generals in 1983.

With workers shouting slogans of "the miners are not alone" and "no to war", this was effectively the first general strike in the country's history. By that time 120,000 metal workers had already begun striking with demands similar to those of the miners.

On January 4, 100,000 people left the Black Sea coal mining town of Zonguldak to embark on a march to the Capital to protest against the government's anti-labour position. After three days on the road, the strikers, their wives and children had travelled 100 kilometres and had reached the trans-Turkey motorway.

Here, however, hundreds of riot police and troops backed by water cannons and bulldozers blocked the way. For two days the miners attempted to pass peacefully but were repulsed. Security forces arrested 326 miners and refused to allow some supplies through to feed the huge mass of protesters. After another night out on the freezing mountainside, it seemed the miners either had to enter into a violent clash with security forces or return to Zonguldak. They decided on a "tactical retreat" - as they call it - and marched back to Zonguldak, but their strike continues

with support from workers and trade unions all around the world.

These new workers' actions have also mobilised Turkish and Kurdish communities in Europe and Britain in solidarity actions. Kurdish and Turkish workers in London boycotted work on January 3 in coordination with the one day general strike in Turkey.

Turkish shops in Hackney also refused to open in defiant action of solidarity. This strike action was brutally attacked by the local police. Sixty strikers were arrested and eight hospitalised. Turkish and Kurdish people in London were attacked later that day outside the notorious Stoke Newington police station where they were demanding the release of those arrested.

A *Solidarity committee with Striking Miners of Turkey* has been set up in London to build solidarity between British workers and the labour movement in Turkey, and to collect money to support their struggle. A campaign against the Turkish government's war drive is also now on the agenda.

Dirty dealing

Millions of other workers are due to strike by February and March, but they now face the prospect of all industrial action being banned, with the Gulf war being used as the excuse.

This explains why a major element in the strikes has been a strong anti-war sentiment in defiance of President Ozal's plans for a pre-emptive strike on Baghdad by which he is hoping to demonstrate just how good a friend he is of George Bush, and to overcome his domestic unpopularity by becoming one of the strategic thinkers of Turkish history.

"We want to be invited to the victory banquet, not to be on the menu", says one of Ozal's colleague, hinting at the imperialist aspirations of the Turkish government for a slice of the post-war Middle East, which are embarrassingly obvious.

Moreover, the circumstances of war and confusion provide the government with a rare opportunity for a decisive suppression of the "Kurdish intifada" in south eastern Turkey.

Free Turkey!

Turkey is now at the crossroads either to political freedom or bonapartist dictatorship, and the latter possibility has been reinforced by the threats of war.

All the social democrat and leftist union leaders have already declared that if President Ozal drags the country into the imperialist war in the Middle East, they will once again support the demands from below for a general strike.

In short, the Turkish labour movement's growing realisation of its strength after a decade of restrictions represents an important challenge to the government's war drive.

In contrast with the pseudo patriotic slogan to "Free Kuwait" workers of Turkey have developed the slogans of "Free Palestine, Free Kurdistan, Free Turkey!"

European capitals divided on Gulf War

While Britain was clear from the start on backing the United States to the hilt and in pinning its future on being the lap dog of US imperialism, other European countries have faced more complex decisions, argues GILL LEE.

In return for defending the interests of all imperialist nations in the Gulf War, and smashing the 'upstart' Saddam, the United States will expect massive trading concessions from Europe and Japan. In launching such an adventure now at least part of the US war aims include heading off the development of a powerful united Europe, based on an economically strong, united Germany.

While the success or failure of the US plans will largely depend on the military course of the war, and on the political developments which will follow it in the Middle East, decisions made by the individual European ruling classes will also play a role.

Jacques Delors has warned that the dream of European Union could fade if Europe does not respond to the Gulf crisis by redoubling efforts at political union, including a common foreign and security policy. But while the fighting continues, and the main European countries are being pushed into further economic and military support for US policy in the Gulf, the European imperialist powers have so far been unable to reach a united or decisive response.

Due to its economic weight, a reunited Germany would be the obvious leader of a politically, economically and militarily united Europe. But Germany has so far been unable to play any significant independent role in the Gulf crisis. While its constitution forbids deployment of German troops outside NATO territory, it is also clear that any attempt to involve Germany militarily in the Gulf would meet huge resistance from the population as a whole.

Berlin

While public opinion changed dramatically after the beginning of the war – from 80% against the war prior to January 15th to 70% in favour of the US action after the war began – this does not necessarily imply public support for the use of German troops. Mobilisation



John Harris

Let's build on the lessons of other countries

tions against the war continue to be huge – an estimated 250,000 took part in demonstrations in Bonn and Berlin on January 26th.

Since fighting broke out Chancellor Kohl has been attempting to move Germany further behind US policy. Under increasing pressure to pay towards the imperialist war effort, Kohl has intimated that Germany and Japan together may pay for up to one third of the cost of a three month war, about £23 billion. And Germany has also agreed to give 'humanitarian aid' to Israel, while Kohl has explicitly criticised the 'anti-US' edge to anti-war demonstrations.

However Germany could yet be drawn directly into the war through an attack on Turkey. Kohl has sent 18 fighter planes and 270 troops to Turkey as part of the NATO defence force, despite opposition from the Greens and the SPD. Use of German troops, even in 'defence' of NATO territory would be sure to result in huge internal problems for the Kohl government, already substantially weakened one year after unification.

The involvement of Turkey in the war, and any such generalised activation of NATO commitments, could also produce huge strains in other European countries.

Stoppages in Spain

Two million workers stopped work for two hours in the Spanish state to protest the outbreak of war and hundreds of thousands joined demonstrations. Although the actual forces sent by the Spanish state to the Gulf are minimal, other assistance has been given. The runways at Torrejon near Madrid have been used for half the US flights to and from the Gulf, while Spanish intelligence has warned Israel of forthcoming Scud raids.

Felipe Gonzalez has also promised to pay \$500 million (or about one day's war costs) to the Gulf operation, but further backing from the Socialist Government for the war against Iraq will surely encounter even greater resistance than has resulted from this minimal aid. Spanish workers remember only too well the support given to the Franco dictatorship by the United States, and are extremely unwilling to see their country involved in a US-led war.

The Greek government also faces a hard task in sorting out how to balance internal opposition with its own long term interests. Faced with a huge wave of student unrest, it was already in a state of crisis. The Greek government is also facing pressure to become more involved in the Gulf war to counter Turkey's growing alliance with the US.

Greece had previously hoped that Cyprus might be on the agenda of any international Middle Eastern conference and had compared Iraq's occupation of Kuwait to Turkey's occupation of Cyprus. The Greek ruling class must now fear that the US may back Turkey's interests as a reward for its current support for the US war in the Gulf.

Ambivalent

France too is moving increasingly behind the US, despite playing an ambivalent role at the beginning of the crisis. This reflects the real tensions within the ruling class, which for decades backed and armed Iraq with modern Mirage fighters and Exocet missiles.

This long term alliance with Iraq could also be seen in the French attempts to find a negotiated solution right up to the January 15th deadline, and by the continued survival in government of Mitterrand's Minister of Defence Chevenement, who has led parliamentary opposition to the war.

The Mitterrand government wants a leading role in any peace settlement which might flow out of the Gulf War. Once war started, France was scared of being left behind and isolated from the powers which may now run a post-Gulf War world. However in throwing in its hand with the United States, France also has to confront a strong anti-war movement, the backbone of which is increasingly found among the five million North African immigrants living in France.

In the opening stages of the war it is inevitable that the imperialist powers of Europe are facing pressure to join in behind the US or risk being left behind in any post-war settlement. However in doing this they face resistance. As the war progresses, and imperialist losses escalate, such resistance will surely increase.

Students rock Greek government

The new, right wing, New Democracy government of Prime Minister Kostas Mitsotakis, has been shaken to its foundations by the mass occupation of Greek high schools, polytechnics and colleges by the students for the past seven weeks. 2,500 high schools and 80% of higher education facilities have been occupied, reports ALAN THORNETT.

The militancy of the students and the scale of the actions took the authorities completely by surprise. At first they said the occupations were illegal and ordered the students to leave, but then realised that they were too big to deal with by force and took no action.

The protests had began in early December after the minister of education announced a "multi-education Bill". This involved big cuts in funding to Greece's crumbling education system and the closure of many of the schools and colleges and the promotion of private education.

It was also linked to a series of disciplinary measures against the students, and included various EC measures and a tightening of discipline. New criteria for absences included a disciplinary points system which would also be affected by things done outside of school hours. Too many points could result in lengthy suspension from school. The Bill also included regulations on dress and against trade union organisation in the schools.

Occupations started in Crete and quickly spread through the provinces eventually to Athens. The 24-hour occupations continued throughout the Christmas holiday period with the escalating politicisation of those involved.

Teachers, who had already been in conflict with the government over pay and conditions, supported the protest after the authorities demanded that they monitor the student activists in the occupations. They called a half day strike on the first day of the term.

After failing to end the occupations, New Democracy thugs organised bands of so-called "angry parents" to evict the occupiers from some of the schools. On Tuesday January 8th a 38 year old teacher, Nikos Tempogras, was beaten to death in Patras, in the North West of Greece, by a local New Democracy councillor with an iron bar at the

head of such a group of "parents".

The following day, Wednesday, an ad-hoc committee of students and teachers, meeting at 2am, announced a demonstration for 1pm that afternoon in Athens: it mobilised 40,000 people.

On Thursday a second demonstration was called by the student coordination committee, in which over 100,000 students took to the streets of Athens – the biggest demonstration in Greece for many years. Patras itself was gripped by repeated mass demonstrations and a virtual general strike at the time of the funeral of the murdered teacher. That night the minister of education resigned.

That same night, police attacked students in Athens city centre. Huge battles followed which went on all night. 3,500 tear gas canisters were fired and a shop close to Omonia Square was set on fire by a tear gas canister which went in through the window. Four people were trapped inside and were burned to death. Fire fighters were prevented from fighting the fire by the police and the tear gas.

Ministers tried to blame the demonstrators, arguing that it is impossible for a tear gas canister to start a fire. Even the store owner and the fire fighters blamed the police. The government case fell apart dramatically when it emerged that police tear gas canisters carry a warning that they could start a fire!

The following day in a show of unity between workers and the students, 70,000 workers turned out on a demonstration called by the Greek trade unions. A 48-hour strike closed all schools, and strikes disrupted industries and services in many parts of Greece.

The occupation movement reached its height in mid-January with schools and colleges transformed into hives of political activity – and with slogans and demands ranging from more money for education to the resignation of the government and the ending of the Gulf war.

Self-organisation has been remarkable. From an early stage general meetings of the students began to take all decisions through a coordinating committee which they established. The whole movement, for the first time in Greece, has been completely outside the official organisations of the students. The students' union not only failed to lead, but failed even to follow the movement of the students, and was left far behind.



Police attack demonstrators

This was dramatically demonstrated when the government, in the shape of the newly appointed education minister, was forced to negotiate directly with the unofficial students' coordinating committee, and not the official organisations.

None of the major political parties, Pasok or the Communist Party (KKE) supported the movement of the students.

I visited a huge polytechnic complex in a suburb of Athens on January 20 in the middle of the night. There were several hundred students in the building, with committees meeting, political discussions, and social activities going on. They had lighting and heating, and controlled the whole premises including the administration offices, with telephones and fax machines, and the canteen. There were students on the main gates checking those going in and out.

One of the organisers told me that "There has been a politicisation, a very important one, at the base of the movement. This is the generation which had lost its self confidence. Now there is a very big change of consciousness. It was slow in the beginning. But after the killing of the teacher, the rise in consciousness was very fast".

The government has now conceded most of the demands of the students, although the occupations are continuing. The whole package of reforms has been withdrawn – which is a huge victory. But the government has only agreed to put 20bn Drachma more into education – which is a fraction of what the students are demanding.

The occupations, however, will have a major impact on Greek politics. They are a huge boost to both the labour and student movement after the shock of the election of a right wing Thatcherite-type government – which moved against the unions with anti-union laws and the students through the education reforms.

Can the New Democracy government survive? We may not have to wait long to see. Any government which has to make concessions to a popular movement in this way has very big problems. One thing is clear, however: a new radical generation of students has been created by this struggle which will have a positive impact on Greek politics for some time to come.

The Labour Party and imperialist wars: Always waving the bosses' flag

The jingoistic support of the Labour Party (and TUC) for the imperialist war in the Gulf should come as no surprise. Since its formation in 1900, the Party has been almost unswerving in the backing it has given to British imperialism's foreign interests in general, and it's wars in particular, reports PETE FIRMIN.

In the run up to the First World War Labour, like all the European parties of the Socialist International, was opposed to war. At the Socialist International conference in 1910 it was the British delegates who proposed a cross-Europe simultaneous general strike in the event of war (though this policy was defeated).

On July 30 1914 the Parliamentary Labour Party unanimously passed a resolution expressing the hope that 'on no account will this country be dragged into the European conflict in which, as the Prime Minister has stated, we have no direct or indirect interest'. It also called 'upon all labour organisations in the country to watch events vigilantly so as to oppose, if need be, in the most effective way any action which may involve us in war'.

As war threatened, huge demonstrations backed the Labour leaders' calls for peace. On August 2, Keir Hardie and Arthur Henderson (the Party secretary) spoke at a mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square urging the government to keep out after Germany had declared war on France.

However, as soon as Britain did enter the war, Labour swung over to support. Ramsey MacDonald (later the Labour Party's arch-traitor for forming a National Government with the Tories in 1931) opposed the war and resigned as leader. Henderson took his place and the great majority of the Labour Party supported the government, took part in the recruiting campaign and accepted an electoral truce. Labour got its first taste of government when Henderson was rewarded with a cabinet post in Asquith's coalition and two

other Labour MPs took junior office.

Keir Hardie and MacDonald didn't like the war but opposed any agitation aimed at ending it. In September 1914, Macdonald joined with four anti-war Liberals to form the 'Union of Democratic Control', which demanded democratic control of foreign policy, no annexations, an international organisation to maintain peace, and disarmament.

In 1916 Party conference opposed the conscription bill on principle, though saying the party would cease agitation on the question if it was passed.

When Lloyd George formed a new coalition government in December 1916, Labour-representation increased.

The Party's 'Memorandum on War Aims' drawn up towards end of 1917 demanded the establishment of a League of Nations and machinery to deal with international disputes.

One of the few honourable attitudes taken by the Labour Party in foreign policy came in 1920 over the issue of imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union. At the end of April 1920 London dockers had refused to load the 'Jolly George' with ammunition and other supplies for Poland in its offensive against the Soviet Union.

By July 1920, the Polish army was in retreat with the Red Army in pursuit. Talks over a peace settlement broke down, and on 3rd August the British government warned the Russians that they would come to the aid of Poland if the Russian advance continued. On August 4, Henderson as Party secretary sent out telegrams(!) to all affiliated Labour Parties and Trades Councils warning of 'the extremely menacing possibility' of an extension of the Polish-Russian war and strongly urging local parties to organize 'citizens demonstrations' for the following Sunday to protest against intervention and the supply of men and ammunition to Poland.

Party leaders signed a manifesto exonerat-

ing the Russians from responsibility in the crisis and warning that 'Labour will not cooperate in a war as allies of Poland'. The government proceeded to back off from giving armed support.

However, when the first Labour government was formed in December 1923 it had no qualms at continuing imperial rule over the colonies as before, including the aerial bombing of Iraqi villages in 1924. The National government of the 'pacifist' MacDonald attempted to crush the Indian revolution in 1930 with the jailing of Gandhi and the shooting down of workers and peasants.

In late 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia). In the run up to this both the TUC and LP conference overwhelmingly passed resolutions pledging 'firm support for any action consistent with the principles and statutes of the League [of Nations] to restrain the Italian government and to uphold the authority of the League in enforcing peace'. Neither sanctions nor military action were supposed to be excluded by this, but nothing was done to check Italian aggression: on May 9 1936 Mussolini proclaimed Italy's annexation of Abyssinia - and Labour did nothing.

When the Spanish civil war started in July 1936 the international labour movement had a policy that 'in accordance with the existing rules of international law, the legal government of Spain should be permitted to obtain the necessary means for its own defence'. But by September the Labour Party was supporting the non-intervention agreement signed by Britain, Russia, Germany, Italy and other powers.

It argued that the non-intervention agreement might lessen international tension, provided it was scrupulously observed on all sides - a pious hope which no-one could seriously expect to see fulfilled.

As breaches of the agreement by Italy and Germany became clearer pressure on the Party increased, and eventually it adopted the



John Harris/FL

slogan 'Arms for Spain': but was not prepared to initiate the kind of campaign which was necessary if Republican Spain was to survive, instead restricting itself to relief work.

The Second World War saw a re-run of Labour's policy in the first. In 1940 Labour joined Churchill's coalition government. Two of the five War Cabinet ministers were Labour. Most major figures of the post-war (1945-51) Labour government held high office during the war.

One of Ernest Bevin's first acts as Minister of Labour was the passing of the Emergency Powers Act of May 1940 endowing his office with virtual dictatorial powers to conscript labour. These powers were used extensively against strikes.

In March 1942 Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour member of the government, was sent to India to pacify the Indian Congress Party leaders who refused to support the war effort unless India was granted independence. He offered India full independence 'after the war'. Gandhi refused this 'post-dated cheque' and in August 1942 Congress began a campaign of civil disobedience to force Britain to quit India.

With Cripps' approval Gandhi, Nehru and other Indian leaders were arrested. Atlee chaired the cabinet meeting which approved the detentions and British repression led to nearly 1000 being killed by November 1942.

Labour's support for the U.S. in the Vietnam war is fairly well known. In government Labour backed every horror the US unleashed on Vietnam. As Prime Minister, Harold Wilson pledged unconditional support for the US bombing of North Vietnam and for their entire Vietnam policy in February 1965.

What is less well-known is the direct involvement of British forces in Vietnam at the end of the Second World War. A British expeditionary force intervened to bring to an end the first taste of independence that the people of Vietnam had known for 100 years. After the collapse of the Japanese, the Vietminh, under Ho Chi Minh, had taken power in Hanoi and Saigon. The British force was technically neutral, but refused to recognise the Vietminh government: its task was to hand Vietnam back to France which had controlled it before the war.

During this British occupation from September 1945 to March 1946 the nationalists were quashed at the cost of thousands of Vietnamese lives. At the end of October 1945, 60 Labour MPs issued a statement opposing the use of British troops to 'restore French imperialism in the far East'.

In March 1946 Atlee became the first peacetime Prime Minister to implement military conscription - National Service of 18 months. When the Korean war broke out this

was extended to 2 years. War between North and South Korea began on 25th June 1950 and two days later the cabinet unanimously endorsed US intervention in support of the South.

British troops were immediately sent to 'assist'. When the issue reached the House of Commons on July 5, only three Labour MPs voted against the government action. This same Labour government also helped to crush risings in Greece and Malaya.

Independence was granted to India, but what was depicted as a magnanimous gesture was brought about by the revolt of the Indian



Indian leaders refused Labour's con

navy and massive civil disturbances where it was admitted that 'to stay in India' would have needed an occupation force of 500,000 men.

In 1948 the Nationalist Party in South Africa won an election and established apartheid. Labour's reaction was that the Nationalists in South Africa could be useful allies, being 'terrified of communism' and 'in "complete sympathy" with the aims of British foreign policy'. A cabinet paper of September 1950 wished to cultivate South Africa's goodwill 'from the general strategic and defence points of view'.

Labour's backing for NATO throughout the post-war period is hardly surprising, since it was Bevin who established it in 1949. Atlee also introduced the nuclear arms programme, keeping it secret from everyone, including most of the Cabinet.

Out of government, Labour had one of its few serious disagreements with the Tories over foreign policy in 1956, over Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez canal. On November 1 1956 Labour declared itself profoundly shocked by the British government's attack on Egypt and called on it forthwith to cease all military measures against that country.

The Labour Party organised public meetings on the theme 'Law - Not War' but the limitations of this are seen in its call on people to 'use normal constitutional parliamentary methods to bring pressure to bear on the government and to refrain from industrial action as a means of influencing national

policy'. British military actions came to an end within days and Labour let the matter rest.

As well as his support for the U.S. in Vietnam, the other major foreign policy issue faced by Wilson was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the white majority in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in November 1965. This was met by Wilson with a declaration that it was illegal and mild economic sanctions.

In 1964 Wilson had called for more helicopters to assist British troops fighting Adeni and Yemeni nationalists; had argued in the same year that it was time for Britain to 'get tough' in Cyprus and send in tanks; but in Rhodesia the use of force was ruled out.

Labour's bipartisanship with the Tories over Ireland over the last twenty odd years is sordid, including as it does a Labour Home Secretary sending in the British troops in 1969 and Labour introducing the Prevention of Terrorism.

Other than for a short period in the early 1920s, when discontent was at its height in Ireland and Labour moved close to a position of support for self-determination, this repressive approach has been consistent throughout.

The support of Michael Foot for Thatcher's war over the Falklands/Malvinas in 1982 is again well-known, his previous record as a pacifist not preventing him waving the flag.

With rare exceptions we can see that Labour's record is no different to the Tories on foreign policy. Indeed various Labour foreign secretaries have expressed their pride that this is the case. This bipartisanship has made Labour willing to be used in both world wars by the Tories to discipline the workforce 'for the war effort' in a way which the Tories themselves might not have succeeded in doing.

Often the opposition within the party to the leadership's line has called vainly for 'negotiations', in the hope that they will bring a peaceful resolution to the crisis, or that the use of force must be under the authority of some international body like the UN. Rarely have the 'Left' taken a principled line of opposing imperialism's wars and building the opposition to them.

Labour is tied hand and foot to imperialism. Just as it accepts the concept of the 'national interest' on the economy, so it extends this to 'foreign policy', often more so, wanting to prove its respectability.

There is another tradition, of socialist internationalism in the history of the British working class, one which the Labour and Trade Union leaders would like to keep buried. Our task is to take this up, and for as long as these leaders can claim to speak in our name take up the fight against them.

The fight for unity of the Arab nation

Saddam Hussein has attempted to link the issue of his invasion of Kuwait with the oppression of the Palestinians by the Israeli state. While Saddam raises the issue of the Palestinians for his own demagogic reasons – to pose as the champion of the Arab nation – there is indeed a clear link between the question of the annexation of Kuwait and the denial of the rights of the Palestinians: that link is the issue of the Arab nation.

To understand this question it is necessary to look at how the present Arab states came into being. Here, GEOFF RYAN looks at developments in the Mashreq (the part of the Arab world east of and including Egypt).

In the Middle Ages the Arabs established an empire stretching from what is now Saudi Arabia to present-day Mauritania and as far North as modern Turkey and parts of Europe. The development and growth of the Arab empire created a *single* Arab nation – not a number of different Arab nations.

The conquest of the Arab empire by the Turkish Ottoman empire did not change this historical reality. The Turks created different provinces – but this was essentially for administrative purposes. Under the Ottoman empire there remained a single Arab nation, which waged a united campaign against Turkish oppression.

The creation of the present states

The present states that exist in the Arab world are all products of the conquest of the Ottoman empire by Western – particularly

British and French – imperialism.

The process of British and French intervention into the Arab world began in the 19th century. By 1830 France already controlled Algeria, from where it was able to gain control of Morocco and Tunisia; and by the end of the century Britain emerged as the dominant power in Egypt, even if this was still formally attached to the Turkish empire and didn't become a British colony until after the First World War. In 1899 Britain gained control of Kuwait.

However, it was primarily the carve-up of the defeated Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War that brought about the creation of separate states in the Arab East. The states that came into existence – Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Palestine, Yemen, Egypt and the various small Gulf states – did not correspond to any national divisions; they were essentially geographical names. Hence Lebanon is the name of a mountain; Transjordan means 'across the river Jordan', while 'Saudi' Arabia is the name of the ruling family. The borders of these states corresponded to the imperialists' spheres of influence, not to any real geographical boundaries. Hence the borders of Iraq correspond to the sum total of the concessions granted to the Iraq Petroleum Company.

Although the Ottoman empire did have a province called 'Syria' (the name refers to the long dead Assyrian people, not to any existing nation) it was not precisely delimited. In fact the Ottoman province of Syria included the whole of the territory of Palestine. In the 19th century the terms Syria and Palestine were even used interchangeably.

And 'Syria' provides the most extreme example of how the present Arab states have no real historical basis. The French initially



British troops in Palestine

divided it up into two small states – based on the Allaouite and Druze religious faiths – in order to try to weaken the Arab national movement. However, given the lack of enthusiasm of the Arab peoples of all religious beliefs this plan had to be abandoned.

The carve-up of the Arab East was not, however, simply a product of inter-imperialist agreement. It also contained large amounts of inter-imperialist rivalry which had its effects on the Arab national movement. British imperialism in particular recognised the growing strength of Arab nationalism and was prepared to use this nationalist feeling for its own ends.

In 1915 Sir Henry MacMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo promised Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca (and father of Faisal, future founder of the Hashemite dynasty), an Arab kingdom in return for Hussein leading a revolt against the Turks. Whilst Hussein was far from being a revolutionary nationalist – in fact he hoped by his alliance with British imperialism to *defeat* the rising nationalist movement – he allied himself with Nationalist army officers whose goals went much further than those of British imperialism. (Just to be on the safe side Hussein proclaimed himself King of the Arabs in 1916 whilst continuing to negotiate with the Turks both before and after the "Arab Revolt" of June 1916). Because of the weakness of its leadership, the "Arab

Revolt" was, however manipulated by British imperialism – via the famous "Lawrence of Arabia". Hussein never gained his Arab kingdom, though his imperialist allies later gave the thrones of Iraq and Jordan to his sons Faisal and Abdallah.

The Sykes-Picot agreements

At the same time as MacMahon was discussing with Hussein, more meaningful negotiations were going on between the British and French diplomats Sir Mark Sykes and Charles-François-Georges Picot. These produced the famous Sykes-Picot Agreements which agreed on the division of the spoils of the Ottoman empire between British and French imperialism.

Obviously the Sykes-Picot Agreements were totally at odds with the promises made to Hussein making no provision for any independent Arab kingdom. Naturally they were kept secret until published by the Bolsheviks after the Russian October Revolution. The revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreements finally broke any alliance between the Arab nationalist movement and Britain.

It was for this reason that, not convinced of the ability of the Hashemites and other reactionary Arab leaders to keep the national movement in check, Britain turned to another source of support – the Zionist movement.

Balfour Declaration

In November 1917 the British Minister of Foreign Affairs Lord Balfour wrote to Sir Lionel de Rothschild to inform him that "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".

The formula of "a national home" was of course deliberately vague in order to win support for British imperialism's plans from the Zionist movement – and particularly to encourage the Zionists to mobilise American and Russian Jews to support Britain's continuing war effort, as well as isolate the Bolsheviks – whilst at the same time avoiding incensing Arab national feelings.

The "Balfour Declaration" was certainly a long way short of agreeing to the setting up of a Jewish state in Palestine and at times British imperialist interests were to conflict with those of the Zionists. For Britain the "Balfour Declaration" was simply a way of creating another useful tool to use against Arab national aspirations.

After the partition of the Arab East the Arab national movement found itself having to face up to a very new situation. Firstly, instead of being oppressed by a single, and relatively weak, power – Turkey – it was now confronted by two major imperialist powers, Britain and France.

Moreover, the movement now found itself divided up between a number of small states, a situation which suited the reactionary Arab feudal landowners and politicians, since it permitted them to cling to imperialism and con-

tinue to enjoy their privileges, protecting their social, economic and political positions. French imperialism was particularly adept at manipulating religious differences to further divide the movement. Finally there was the problem of the Zionist colonisation of Palestine.

Despite all these problems the Arab national movement did grow, and gained an influence in all the states of the region. Moreover, the limited industrialisation that occurred created an Arab working class which rapidly became involved in the national movement. Its ranks were joined by peasants thrown off the land. Previously confined to a movement of intellectuals the Arab national movement became more and more a movement of the masses.



Nasser: no democrat

Mass campaigns were led in Egypt by the nationalist Wafd party in the 1920s and 1930s, which forced the British to make major concessions; and in Syria a 50-day General Strike led to promises of independence by the French. A major insurrection took place in Iraq.

The movement was marked by strong secular tendencies. The founder of the Egyptian Wafd party, Said Zaglul, who played a major role in developing the revolutionary nationalist movement in the early 1920s, put forward the slogan "Religion for God and the Fatherland for Everybody", which contrasts very favourably with the dominant current in present day Arab nationalism.

The extent of this secular approach can also be seen in the attitude taken towards the partition of India by the Arab nationalists. The nationalists supported the Hindu-dominated Congress Party – which argued against partition – and denounced the Muslim League as agents of British imperialism for their support for the creation of a Muslim Pakistan.

Unfortunately, in Palestine the Arab national movement remained under the control of the big landowners. They were able to divert the nationalist movement into violently anti-Semitic channels, including allying themselves with the Nazis. This aided not only the bourgeois nationalists and the British rulers, but also the Zionists themselves. In fact many of the leaders of the national movement were actually in the pay of the Zionists, some of whom were themselves quite willing to work with Nazis.

Nevertheless there were major clashes between Arab nationalists and British imperialism. In 1933 a General Strike took place, for once directed not against the Jews but against the British Mandate. Small scale guerrilla actions began in 1935 and a further General Strike – which lasted 6 months – began in 1936. Gradually the movement developed towards full-scale rebellion in which the workers and peasants played an ever increasing role.

The British Civil Service and police force were driven out of Arab towns and a rebel administration was set up in the liberated areas, including the Old City of Jerusalem. Support committees were set up in all the neighbouring Arab countries, whilst volunteers from Syria, Iraq and Jordan joined the guerrilla struggle.

The Second Arab Revolt lasted until 1939, and was only defeated by massive British military intervention, including by the RAF; it confirmed a number of points about the nature of the Arab revolution. Firstly it showed that the feudal land-owners and the Arab bourgeoisie were incapable of leading any real struggle against imperialism. By 1939 the Mufti of Jerusalem, head of the powerful Hussein family, had succeeded in diverting the struggle into virulent anti-Semitism. The Mufti was, in fact, moving closer and closer to Nazism. Moreover, the Husseinis were more concerned with maintaining their own positions; they carried out terrorist attacks against their political opponents within the nationalist movement.

The Revolt had begun in 1936 as an alliance of the big landowners, the middle class and the intellectuals supported by the working class and peasantry. However, even by September 1936 sections of the bourgeoisie and landowners had withdrawn from the struggle. Some were even prepared to accept the proposals of the Peel Commission, which called for the partition of Palestine. When the Armistice of 1936 broke down and the struggle flared up again many of the landlords fled to neighbouring countries.

Secondly the Arab working class was very weak – Zionist policy of only employing Jews made it very difficult for an Arab working class to grow to any great extent – and unable to win the leadership of the national struggle away from the feudal and bourgeois forces.

Thirdly, the Revolt confirmed Trotsky's observations that the peasantry is incapable of developing an independent political leadership of its own: it either follows the working class or the bourgeoisie. The peasantry played a heroic role in the struggle against British imperialism but was unable to take the leadership of the movement in its own interests. In the absence of a working class leadership the Arab peasantry was doomed to follow the treacherous lead of the landowners and bourgeoisie.

Fourthly the massive support for the Revolt throughout the Arab world, including the sending of volunteer guerrillas, demonstrated the awareness amongst the Arab nationalist movement that there is a single Arab nation.

With the defeat of the Palestinian Revolt and the success of the Mufti in taking the movement in a blatantly pro-Nazi direction there developed strong anti-Semitic currents in other Arab countries, and local Jews, frequently anti-Zionist, were attacked. However in Egypt, where the Arab nationalist movement was most advanced, the nationalists intervened to defend the Jewish population.

After the 2nd World War the Arab national movement again began to assert itself. In 1946 in Egypt there was a wave of strikes and demonstrations against the British presence. In Cairo and Alexandria joint committees were organised by workers and students who not only raised anti-imperialist demands but also slogans against the local land-owners and capitalists. Throughout the Arab East left-wing parties and trades unions were formed. This movement was only halted by the outbreak of war with the newly created state of Israel in 1948. But the groundswell of Arab nationalism would not go away.

Nasserism

In 1952 a group of young army officers, led by Kemal Abdul Nasser, overthrew the British-supported monarchy in Egypt. They destroyed the power of the feudalists by an agrarian reform and carried out some important nationalisations. Schools and universities were secularised, attempts were made to raise the general level of culture throughout the country whilst a programme of providing



for the setting up of a limited parliamentary regime and a restricted legalisation of political parties Nasser was able to mobilise massive demonstrations of the workers of Cairo and Alexandria who, of course wanted no truck with the former "parliamentary" system and no concessions to the old parties. Having defeated Naguib Nasser then turned against the mass movement. This lack of democracy in Egypt was to have a major effect on the outcome of future struggles that were soon to erupt.

For however limited the reforms, and however brutal his regime, Nasser's willingness to oppose imperialism and to speak of the "Arab nation" provided a huge inspiration for the workers and peasants throughout the Arab world to renew their fight against imperialist domination. "Nasserism" led to a massive increase in Arab national consciousness, which grew after the failure of the Franco-Israeli-British invasion in 1956 following Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez canal.

1958

The most important year in the development of Arab nationalism was undoubtedly 1958. In Lebanon a mass insurrection broke out against the reactionary regime of Camille Chamoun, following the assassination of an opposition journalist Massil el-Matouis. This uprising was only finally

defeated after the invasion of Lebanon by United States marines, the sending of its Sixth Fleet and the threat by the US to use nuclear weapons.

Lebanon was created by French imperialism by joining together the autonomous territory of the Maronite Christians, which had been conceded by the Ottoman empire under pressure from western imperialism, to the neighbouring territories with a Muslim majority. The Maronites had already received preferential treatment from the Turks and this policy was continued to an even greater extent by the French in an attempt to divide the Arab national movement. Many of the Maronite leaders were openly pro-Zionist and, with the declining importance of French imperialism turned to the US for whom they acted as willing agents against the rising tide of Arab nationalism.

What is important, therefore, about the 1958 uprising is the level of unity against the

housing for the poor was embarked on.

In reality these reforms were fairly limited in scope; for example only about 10% of the landless or poor peasants received any land through the agrarian reform. Moreover, the Nasser regime was extremely brutal in its dealings with its political opponents. Immediately after the overthrow of King Farouk the workers of Cairo and Alexandria organised mass strikes to fight for their own interests. These were suppressed by Nasser, and the leaders either executed or given long jail sentences. The Communist Party remained illegal and socialist and trade union activists were jailed. All the old political parties were banned, a measure which didn't meet with much opposition at first since all these parties were thoroughly corrupt and tied to the monarchy. Nevertheless, this meant that the Nasser regime was able to continue as a military dictatorship.

When Nasser's main rival Naguib argued

Chamoun government. The insurrection was supported by broad layers of both the Muslim and Maronite masses – including by the patriarch of the Maronite church, Bulus el-Maouschi, and by its conference of bishops who gave their support to the opposition. Moreover, the journalist whose murder sparked off the uprising was also a Maronite Christian. The government, on the other hand received support from the Muslim kings of Iraq and Jordan.

The level of unity achieved in 1958 is truly remarkable when compared to the present state of affairs in Lebanon and the bloody conflicts – both between and within the different religious communities – which have dominated its recent history.

Iraq

Important as the events in Lebanon were they paled into insignificance compared to the massive struggles that broke out in Iraq. In fact the Iraqi revolution of 1958 was far more advanced than the events in Egypt in 1952. Whilst Nasser came to power essentially through a revolt of sections of the army, the Iraqi monarchy of King Faisal was overthrown by a mass explosion of popular anger.

Whilst in Egypt political parties were banned, in Iraq they were made legal, including the Communist Party. This legalisation of the CP followed massive demonstrations – for example over 300,000 took to the streets to demand the inclusion of the CP in the government at a time when the party was still illegal! (In Britain it would require a demonstration of over 1 million people to compare with that level of activity). All political prisoners were immediately set free, political refugees returned to Iraq, and overtures were made to the Kurds.

Instead of waiting for government decrees, the peasants expropriated the land from the big landowners. Whilst the government advised the peasants to wait until a law on agrarian reform was passed it did not resort to brutal suppression of the peasants, again contrasting extremely favourably with developments in Egypt under Nasser.

In fact the government – in which the army played a role but was not dominant – immediately introduced a law restricting the level of rents and threatened the big landowners with heavy fines if they failed to comply. The Iraqi revolution destroyed the imperialist created Iraq-Jordan Federation – which linked together the two British-imposed Hashemite monarchies. It not only removed Faisal but also threatened to spill over into Jordan to unseat King Hussein, as well as challenging British imperialist interests in



Kuwait, which the Iraqi masses clearly felt belonged to them. As a result Britain sent troops to both Jordan and Kuwait to defend its client regimes.

The United Arab Republic

In 1958 Egypt and Syria declared their formal union as the United Arab Republic. The main reason for this was the need to overcome economic backwardness and develop an Arab capitalism. Despite the bourgeois nature of the governments in Syria and, especially, Egypt the creation of the UAR was a major step forward for the Arab masses. In fact the fusion came about as a response to the demands of the masses.

The main support for unity came from Syria, where the political situation was very different from that in Egypt. The masses were far more active in Syria, political parties and trades unions were well developed, the workers were organised independently and the Communist Party had considerable influence. The Baath Party had won considerable support amongst the masses on a programme of unity of all the Arab states, agrarian reform, and increased living standards – a programme that went far beyond the demands of the CP.

The main Syrian bourgeois parties – the Baath and the National Party – found themselves in a similar position to Nasser, though in very different conditions. In order to combat internal reaction and imperialism they needed to mobilise the masses. However, mass mobilisations run the risk of becoming socialist revolutions. Too weak to hold out on their own, they turned to Nasser for help.

The Syrians accepted Nasser's main condition – the dissolution of all political parties – which was a serious set-back for the mass movement. However the banning of parties was more formal than real, except – importantly – in the case of the Communist Party. The Baathists remained the dominant political force in Syria, and Nasser's only legal political organisation the "National Union" was never really established there. The Baathists, moreover, still had links with the Baath parties in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. Nasser was

unable to overturn all the democratic gains made by the Syrian masses.

But it was precisely this fear of uncontrolled, spontaneous uprisings of the masses that led to the refusal by Nasser to contemplate extending the United Arab Republic to include Iraq. For after the overthrow of Faisal the situation in Iraq was far more developed than had ever been the case in Syria. Fusion with Iraq would have enormously strengthened the opposition forces in Syria, who were difficult enough for

Nasser to control on their own.

Unity with Iraq would also have greatly strengthened the Arab national movement throughout the rest of the states of the Arab East – it is very questionable how long the Jordanian monarchy could have survived, even with British troops, in such a situation. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that at this time in Algeria a war of national liberation was being waged, and the extension of the UAR to Iraq could have had enormous benefits for the liberation movement. (There was also some popular agitation for the fusion of an independent Algeria with Tunisia and Morocco, which would have further strengthened the possibilities of reuniting the Arab nation).

For all its weaknesses the United Arab Republic did hold out great potential for the Arab revolution, but this was destroyed by a bourgeois leadership which, in the final analysis, preferred the division of the Arab nation to a single, socialist Arab state. Far from uniting the Arab nation the UAR itself fell apart a few years later when Nasser made a tactical move to the left at a time when the Syrian Baathists were moving right-wards. 1958 was, in many respects, the high point of Arab nationalism and of "Nasserism". Although "Nasserism" continued to have an important influence on large sections of the Arab masses, it found itself increasingly challenged by other currents, particularly Baathism. The Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, followed by Nasser's turn to the pro-imperialist regimes in the region effectively finished off "Nasserism" as a current capable of mobilising anti-imperialist feeling throughout the Arab world.

Subsequent "Nasserite" leaders – such as Qadafi in Lybia and Numeiri in Sudan – were never more than rightist caricatures of the high-point of "Nasserism". Qadafi, for example, has proposed fusion at one time or another to all Libya's neighbouring states, without ever being able to successfully achieve it.

The events in Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and



Iraq demonstrate the common links between the struggles in the various Arab states. The struggles in each state were enthusiastically adopted by the masses throughout the Arab world, thus demonstrating the essential unity of the Arab nation – which is continued today with the identification by the Arab people as a whole with the struggle of the Palestinians and the support given by many Arabs to Saddam Hussein.

The heroic struggles, however, all ended in failure. The independent movements of the masses were defeated, the democratic gains were overturned and brutally repressive regimes took power. "Nasserism" still continued to maintain an important influence

Arab Communist Parties

The Communist parties are amongst the oldest political parties in the Arab world – certainly they pre-date both Nasserism and Baathism. However, they were also some of the first Communist Parties to become thoroughly Stalinised. Their policies have been marked by sharp zig-zags between complete capitulation to the national bourgeoisie and a sectarian opposition to the national struggle. Like Communist Parties throughout the world their policies were determined not by the needs of the class struggle but by the line emanating from Moscow.

For example in Palestine the CP characterised the anti-Jewish riots of 1929 as an anti-imperialist revolt, diverted into a pogrom by imperialist agents. But this characterisation was adopted *after* the event, in response to Stalin's ultra-left 'Third Period' turn. At the time of the pogroms the CP had participated in the self-defence brigades to protect Jewish workers, alongside the Zionist Hagannah militia. After the abandonment of the Third Period the PCP tailended the most right-wing sections of the Arab national movement.

The influence of the CPs was considerably weakened in the post war period by the decision of the Soviet Union to support the

creation of the state of Israel – even more so when they tried to justify Stalin's position by adopting extremely sectarian theories about the national question. These theories were, in many ways, an extension of the positions adopted during the Second World War when Stalin urged an alliance with the 'democratic' imperialist powers – which of course meant abandoning any struggle for national liberation. Thus it was logical for the Algerian Communist Party to strongly oppose the armed independence struggle that began in 1945. They spoke of "the historical common interests of France and Algeria".

This sectarian failure to understand the national question led the Syrian CP – the largest in the Arab world at the time – to oppose the union with Egypt – a mistake which isolated it from the masses (who enthusiastically endorsed union), and which facilitated the Party being banned. The CPs also totally opposed the Iraq-Jordan Federation, seeing it simply as a pro-imperialist creation (which it certainly was) without understanding that even this reactionary body was contradictory. It was not simply an expression of imperialist interests – it also reflected the desire of the Arab people for unity. The task was not to break up the Federation but to unite the masses to overthrow the reactionary monarchies in both Iraq and Jordan.

Having initially opposed the formation of the United Arab Republic the CPs then swung rapidly in the opposite direction and became totally uncritical supporters, even going so far as to refuse to call for their own legalisation. Yet again they were following the latest turn in Moscow which had recently developed strong, if opportunist, links with Nasser.

In Iraq the CP correctly participated in the mass struggles that broke out in 1958. However, instead of encouraging the masses to seize power for themselves, the CP urged support for General Kassem. This support continued despite Kassem's repression of the

CP. This led up to the massacre of the Communist Party by the Baathist regime that overthrew Kassem in 1963, and later spawned Saddam Hussein.

Since then the CPs have continued to tail-end bourgeois nationalist Arab leaderships. In 1964 the recently legalised Egyptian CP decided to dissolve into Nasser's Arab Social Union (the same Nasser who for years had brutally suppressed the CP). The Sudanese CP supported the military coup of General Numeiri in 1969: two years later he massacred them. Further massacres were to follow in Iraq in the 1970s, but the CPs have continued to practice the same policies.

Moreover, the Stalinists have never tried to organise a pan-Arab party. They have always organised on the basis of the division of the Arab world imposed by imperialism, believing that it is necessary to liberate each country separately, and only fight for unity in the dim and distant future. (In the former French colonies of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria the CPs didn't even exist as independent organisations for a long time – they were sections of the French Communist Party! So much for anti-imperialism).

All the events that have taken place since the decline of Nasserism show clearly that the struggles in the Arab states are indissolubly linked – the massacre of the Palestine Resistance in Jordan, the Syrian intervention in Lebanon for example. They also show clearly that the bourgeois (and remaining feudal) leaderships are incapable of waging a struggle anywhere near the level of that led by Nasser – and Nasser fell far short of what was necessary. Only a struggle for socialism – a struggle led by the working class but embracing the democratic demands of the peasantry – is capable of meeting the needs of the workers and peasants throughout the region and of uniting the Arab nation.

The United Nations Blue helmets for peace and justice?

Support for the United Nations is almost an article of faith for many socialists, especially on the Labour left. But, says PHIL HEARSE, the assumption that the United Nations, or the military forces it supports, represent an independent force for peace and justice is challenged by the basic facts about its history.

The UN has always been dominated by the great powers and their interests, especially those of the United States.

The forerunner of the UN, the League of Nations founded in 1919, denounced by Lenin as a "den of thieves" was a hopeless failure. It drifted through the 1920s and '30s as a talking shop, while the rise of fascism, the Spanish civil war, the Stalinist purges went on around it. And of course it was incapable of stopping the Second World War.

After the war, in the flush of enthusiasm for the US-British collaboration with Russia to defeat Nazi Germany, the idea of the UN as a force which could actually police the world for the major powers took hold.

The basic flaws in the UN are to be found in its Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights – its founding documents. The Declaration of Human Rights is 98 per cent acceptable to socialists (1). But the Charter makes it clear – and it is implicit in the name United Nations – that the UN is an organisation of states. By definition socialists have few common interest with most states in the post-war world. Moreover, the very structure of the UN, giving a veto on crucial questions to the 5 permanent members of the Security Council – the USA, France, Britain, the USSR and China – makes explicit the obvious fact that not all states are equal.

The Korean War (1950-53) disproved at one go that the UN was a force for peace. The war against North Korea, dominated by US forces, was waged in the name of the UN. Wearing the famous blue helmets of UN 'peace-keeping' forces did not prevent this from being a war waged by imperialism.

In the 1950s the membership of the UN began to change. The process of 'de-

colonisation' brought into existence dozens of new African and Asian states who took their seats in the UN. This created the powerful 'third world' bloc, which was able to exert considerable political influence – often against Western interests.

But the real force of this new bloc was only felt in the General Assembly. The Security Council maintained its monopoly of crucial decisions, and remained dominated by the big powers.

The UN did play a role in forcing Britain, France and Israel out of Egypt after the Suez invasion in 1956, but this was only possible because the United States chose, for its own reasons, to oppose this action.

In 1960 the 'Belgian' Congo became independent. Its new government was led by radical nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba. He soon found disfavour in the West. The US set out to destabilise his government. Katanga province, the centre of the country's huge mineral wealth, broke away aided by the US and Belgium. A bloody civil war broke out, and Belgium sent troops to defend Katanga. After an appeal by Lumumba, the UN sent contingents of Swedish, Irish, Nigerian and Indian troops to aid the central government. This decision was a highpoint of third world influence in the UN.

The motive of defeating the rebellion was a laudable one. But the UN force was defeated in this project by the sabotage of the Western powers. CIA operatives, collaborating with the Belgians, openly worked against the UN forces. The CIA itself assassinated Patrice Lumumba. It was an example of the failure of a military intervention precisely because the US worked against it.

In the mid-1960s the UN was a helpless spectator during the Vietnam war. The warring sides fought the war, and ultimately negotiated, above the heads of the UN. Again, when the US and Soviet Union negotiated the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty in 1971 – signalling a period of fairly stable 'peaceful coexistence' – the UN had no role to play.



Palestine: difficult issue for US

Like most major shifts in world politics, the UN was pushed to the background.

Throughout the 1970s and '80s the most difficult question for the Americans in the UN has been that of the Palestinians. Repeatedly, in order to maintain its system of alliances in the Middle East with reactionary Arab government, the US has been forced into making verbal concessions on the issue.

While many Security Council motions criticising Israel have been vetoed, nonetheless others – notably Resolution 242 demanding the end of the Israeli occupation of lands won in the 1967 and 1973 wars – have been passed. But as is obvious today, the United States has ensured that these resolutions remained simply well-intentioned demands with no intention to implement them.

The nadir of the UN has been the Gulf war. Soviet collaboration with US war aims, with pledges of US aid or credit, and Chinese acquiescence, and the shameless bribery of poorer nations have ensured that the UN has played the American game, creating the illusion of an international consensus on the issue.

Is the UN then simply a tool of US imperial interests? The reality is more complex. The United States has had to bow to some demands of third world countries. During the cold war it was confronted with Soviet vetoes in the Security Council. But it is clear that never has the UN been effectively mobilised in any cause which conflicted with fundamental US interests. Votes condemning US aggression against Nicaragua have been simply ignored.

Security Council vetoes are only part of the reason. Funding of the UN is another. Its apparatus is hugely expensive, and without American money it would collapse or be much

reduced in scale. Heavy hints that the UN might have to move out of New York have sent shivers down the spines of its well-paid international bureaucrats. The US pulling the plug is a permanent threat to the UN's existence.

Of course the UN is not just political debate and military operations. It has a large network of cultural bodies like UNESCO; and economic development agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome and the World Health Organisation in Geneva. These are all characterised by two things. First, extreme problems when confronting established Western interests (which leads to automatic self-limitation); and second insufficient resources to accomplish really major changes in the lives of many people in the third world or elsewhere.

In the contemporary world it is not possible to establish an international organisation of states which will be willing and able to act as a major force for peace, justice, economic and cultural development and human rights, because all these worthy objectives are incompatible – in the last analysis – with the world order which the overwhelming majority of nation states support.

It is an obvious mistake to see each and every act of the UN and its agencies as the evil work of imperialism. There is no doubt that the UN can sponsor projects which can bring clean water to some villages in Africa or help fight malaria. Sometimes even its military operations, like the sending of troops to police the Israel-Lebanon border in 1978, can provide a very temporary obstacle to reactionary interests. But the UN is incapable of doing anything fundamental about world hunger, or bringing justice to the Palestinians or even preventing the outbreak of major wars.

Internationalism, the international solidarity of peoples, is a central part – if not the central part – of socialism. But to become a reality it needs governments which represent the interests of the majority – the thousands of millions of workers and peasants.

From time to time the voice of these interests is raised in the UN, at least in a partial way, by countries like Cuba and Nicaragua under the FSLN. But on all the questions which really matter, like war in the Gulf, those who pay the piper – and wield the Security Council veto – will call the tune.

Footnote

(1) Perhaps 98 per cent is pushing it. The Declaration contains strong clauses stressing the right to family life, without any reference to freedom of sexual orientation or women's rights; it also heavily stresses the right to property and the right not to have it expropriated! Despite its overall bourgeois democratic framework, in practice many of its provisions – like the right to work and a decent standard of living – cannot be met by capitalist or Stalinist governments.



Korean women rally against US

Korea: where the US showed Saddam some dirty tricks

Boasts that the US and its allies have assembled the biggest amphibious assault force since the Inchon landings in Korea serve as a stern warning of the precedents to today's war in the Gulf, reports JOHN LISTER.

Saddam Hussein has bought or copied all his weapons, and learned many of his dirty tricks from the forces that now wage war against him in the Gulf, flying the United Nations colours as a flag of convenience.

The unholy alliance of greater and lesser imperialist powers, client regimes, opportunist dictatorships and Stalinist bureaucracies involved in the United Nations "coalition" against Saddam is a modern-day equivalent of the 16-nation army led into battle by the USA under the UN banner in Korea in 1950.

Then, as now, the other countries involved (including South Africa) were firmly under US control. Three years of brutal slaughter saw the US high command resort to ever-more genocidal tactics and war crimes in their effort to crush Kim Il Sung's Stalinist-led regime in North Korea and repress the popular movement in the South against the USA's chosen stooge, Syngman Rhee.

By the time of the cease-fire in 1953, some 60,000 UN troops had died; but the war left over three million Koreans (mostly civilians) and a million Chinese soldiers dead, with every city in the North and most in the South destroyed.

Today the imperialist propaganda tries to

exploit Saddam's cynical use of Scud missiles to strike civilian targets in Israel, even while allied bombers drop tons of high explosive onto Iraqi civilian ("economic") targets in Baghdad and Basra.

But in 1950, it was the USA, under UN auspices, which led the way in using its unchallenged air supremacy to flatten civilian targets and whole tracts of North Korea. From November 1950 US General MacArthur ordered his airforce to create a 'wasteland' from the battle-front to the Chinese border, and to destroy by bombing "every installation, factory, city and village".

On November 8, 1950, the US airforce dropped 550 tons of fire bombs on Sinuiju "removing it from the map". On December 14-15, Pyongyang was hit by 700 500-lb bombs, napalm, and 175 tons of delayed-action demolition bombs specifically designed to maximise civilian casualties after the raid. During the spring of 1951 the US navy began a siege of Wonsan, shelling it for '41 straight days and nights': the longest sustained naval or air bombardment in history grew into an 861 day siege, lasting to the end of the war.

Any target was fair game to the USA. Anxious to delay any peace settlement, US planes in 1952 strafed and bombed an agreed 'neutral zone' and even bombed the Northern negotiators en route to peace talks!

The US targets became more callous and enormous. In June 1952, 500 US planes bombed the huge Supung dam on the Yalu river, causing huge floods and cutting electricity throughout much of the North. On August 29, a UN air raid on Pyongyang dropped 10,000 litres of napalm, fired 62,000

rounds of ammunition strafing civilians at low level, and dropped 697 tons of bombs. 6,000 civilians died.

And in a conscious attempt literally to starve the civilian population of the North, the USA in May 1953 led massive air raids against five dams which were key to the irrigation of three quarters of North Korea's rice. "The last time an act of this kind had been carried out, which was by the Nazis in Holland in 1944, it had been deemed a war crime at Nuremberg". (1)

Not content with ordinary genocide, MacArthur, echoed by other US top brass and by Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, itched to use nuclear weapons against the North Koreans – and against the Chinese, taking the war into China itself, and even the USSR.

As early as 1950, Truman and MacArthur uttered threats that they might exploit the US superiority in atomic bombs (they had 450 compared to just 25 in the USSR's arsenal). MacArthur went on to draw up a lunatic scheme to use 26 atomic bombs, plus another four to drop directly on the Northern "invasion forces". He later confessed (in an interview only posthumously published) that:

"I would have dropped between thirty and fifty atomic bombs ... strung across the neck of Manchuria ..." to "spread behind us – from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea – a belt of radioactive cobalt ... it has an active life of between 60 and 120 years".

Though MacArthur was clearly out of control – and was eventually removed as an embarrassment by Truman – the threat to use nukes was repeated by the incoming President Eisenhower in 1953.

The full horror of US chemical warfare – the use of defoliants and other toxins – did not unfold until Vietnam 15 years later: but there is evidence that the Americans used biological weapons – germ warfare – against Chinese and North Korean troops, including plague, anthrax, cholera and encephalitis. An expert inquiry concluded that Chinese allegations were true: and this fits in with the US policy of protecting and reemploying war criminals who had run germ warfare research for the Japanese and the Nazis.

Imperialist indignation at Saddam Hussein's cowardly abuse of prisoners of war in the Gulf also has the ring of hypocrisy in the light of the Korean war, in which the UN/USA shamelessly sought to breach the Geneva Convention in order to introduce the concept of "voluntary" rather than automatic repatriation of POWs after the peace was signed.

The Chinese and Northern troops com-

plained that this was backed up by the use of violence to prevent POWs choosing to return to the North – for propaganda reasons. Those siding with the communists were, in the (private) words of one top US general "beaten black and blue or killed". Indeed the death toll of POWs in UN custody was massive – over 6,600 by the end of 1951, while the toll of dead US POWs was much lower, at 365.

During 1952, the USA mobilised a batal-



Pyongyang devastated by US bombing

ion of tanks and resorted to a shoot-to-kill policy against a revolt of pro-communist POWs at Koje camp. The US troops were ordered to use too much violence rather than too little – and massacred hundreds with tanks and flame throwers.

There are other, sick, political parallels between today's events in the Gulf and those of the Korean War. While today's conflict is conducted in the name of 'containing' Saddam, 'liberating' what will be left of Kuwait, restoring its vicious feudal rulers and preserving the reactionary sheikhdoms through which imperialism dominates the Gulf, the Korean war was to 'contain' and roll back the the Stalinist Kim Il Sung regime, and prop up the wildly unpopular right wing dictatorship of Syngman Rhee against mass workers' opposition in the South.

Rhee's regime, installed by the US after a hasty 'partition' line had been drawn by US army chiefs at the time of the Japanese surrender, rested on brute force: an army headed by former commanders, officers and collaborators of the Japanese colonial occupation. The spontaneous people's committees that sprang up throughout Korea in 1945 were savagely repressed in the South, along with every spark of popular opinion, through the familiar tactics of imprisonment, torture and mass executions of opponents which have characterised so many US-backed regimes.

The UN support for this dictator reflected the total US domination – but also the conscious *abstention* of Stalin's USSR, which would not use its veto to block the war drive. Instead the Kremlin *sabotaged* the war effort in North Korea, refusing to supply Kim Il

Sung with fighter aircraft to enable them to challenge the US aerial bombardment. Following the same cynical line he adopted in the Spanish revolution (and his heirs later adopted in Vietnam), Stalin severely restricted supplies of arms and equipment to the North and the Chinese – and insisted that everything be paid for.

Stalin regarded the Korean struggle, given a degree of independence under Kim Il Sung's leadership, as a threat to the Kremlin's efforts to reach a global settlement with post-war imperialism. He preferred to sit back and allow the imperialists to crush this troublemaker. Only when it was clear that the North and the Chinese were going to hold firm were Soviet planes (and pilots) eventually supplied.

Today, Gorbachev's support for the US/UN offensive against Saddam coincides with his short-term economic interests – seeking loans and aid from the west – and with the Kremlin's global line of compromise with imperialism at the expense of working class struggles.

It is also worth remembering that another US accomplice was the British *Labour* government, which sent 12,000 conscript troops, navy and marines to support Truman's war drive. Labour leaders then – like Kinnock today – threw in their lot to defend "democracy" by propping up a dictatorship, and to oppose "communism" by embracing the most brutal and ruthless exponents of imperialism.

There is one final lesson, however, which Korea passed on to Vietnam and the dozens of victorious colonial liberation struggles that followed: despite the US barbarism, *the Americans did not win!* The resistance of the North, backed by the Chinese Stalinists, who saw the dangers if a US stooge regime was installed on their border, could not be broken.

Northern cities were flattened, millions killed and maimed; but Kim Il Sung's fighters went literally underground, into huge fortified bunkers, complete with subterranean factories. Braving the blitzkrieg, a support force of 700,000 transported supplies across a 200-mile stretch from the Chinese border to maintain what rose to 1.2 million communist troops.

The USA threw everything, short of nuclear bombs, at them – and failed to crush their resistance. For all the determination of today's imperialists in the Gulf, there is no guarantee they will wind up with any more decisive result.

All quotations from the excellent book Korea, the unknown war by Halliday & Cummings (Viking, 1988)

Beyond Gorbachev's Baltic clampdown

Like the imperialist assault on Iraq, with which it was so cynically timed to coincide, the Stalinist assault on the Baltic republics came as no surprise, reports DAVID SHEPHERD.

The build-up had been apparent for months – most dramatically brought to the world's attention by the resignation of the Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze before Christmas ('My protest against the offensive of dictatorship').

What are the implications of the military action in the Baltic for the future of President Gorbachev and his attempts at reform, for Soviet foreign policy and for the the Soviet Union itself? Are we witnessing the beginnings of a process of reaction which will return the USSR to a form of pre-glasnost Stalinist rule? Will an authoritarian-stalinist halt be called to developments towards a market economy? Have the obituaries of the cold war been written prematurely?

Mikhail Sergeevich Bonaparte

President Gorbachev's direct and personal responsibility for the moves towards an authoritarian-military response to the rebellion of the oppressed nations of the USSR should not be doubted for a moment. Consider the evidence.

From at least the latter half of last year Gorbachev has been putting a passionate – and increasingly desperate – defence of a 'unified national state' clearly to the fore as his number one domestic priority. Increasingly, in policy decisions as well as in speeches, his furious battle to preserve the union at all costs has put all other questions in the shade.

In mid-December he denounced 'arrant, extremist nationalism' as the most serious danger facing the country. And his New Year television address repeated the message: 'For us ... there is no more sacred task than to preserve and renew the union.'

This overriding priority has dictated an extremely significant political recomposition at the top of the Soviet regime. Gorbachev turned decisively towards those elements in

the ruling bureaucracy still committed to a unitary state: the Communist Party, the military establishment and the KGB.

A haemorrhaging of the more reformist elements from positions of influence began last year and has accelerated since.

In the past Gorbachev has balanced between the different interest groups and factions within the ruling bureaucracy, reassuring the conservatives at one point, only to come back with bold reform proposals at another. But what has happened over the past months has been something much more profound.

In turning in particular to the military establishment in order to defend the union, Gorbachev has turned to a section of the bureaucracy which is least interested in reform, which is interested above all in defence of its own sectional interests.

In late November the minister of defence Marshal Yazov, 'on a commission from the president of the USSR', appeared on TV to denounce moves by some republics to set up armed units and to circumscribe conscription to the Soviet army. In mid-December the head of the KGB, Vladimir Kryuchkov, appeared on TV at Gorbachev's request to serve notice that his organisation would use all the powers at its disposal to preserve the union.

The removal of the reform-minded liberal Vadim Bakatin from the post of minister of the interior was a further clear signal of the direction of the recomposition in the Soviet leadership. In January his successor was announced: ex-KGB official and former Latvian party hardliner Boris Pugo. The position of second-in-command at the interior ministry (which has at its disposal 700,000 police, 340,000 special troops and 30,000 elite riot cops) was given to the conservative soldier Boris Gromov, former commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

Running in parallel to these, and other, political and personnel changes were the con-



Russian troops in Vilnius

tinuing efforts at increasing the already vast constitutional powers of the president himself, efforts which were successful at the fourth Congress of People's Deputies in December.

The resignation of Shevardnadze at the fourth Congress pointed up another aspect of the political recomposition: the extent of the divisions between sections of the ruling establishment which had hitherto been loyal to Gorbachev's reforms, on the one hand, and the military establishment on the other.

Shevardnadze's warnings about military dictatorship were widely publicised in the west, but his worries that the military establishment had actively (and without his knowledge) undermined and put at risk the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) agreement revealed something equally significant: the turn by the military towards increasingly open involvement in the political scene in defence of its own interests.

This turn has been not only tolerated (or appeased) but actually encouraged by Gorbachev in his efforts to preserve the union.

As early as November, preparatory measures for a crackdown were being made by Gorbachev in relation to the mass media. He appointed the conservative Leonid Kravchenko as head of state TV and radio. The president's calls for 'objectivity' (read censorship) in the media in the aftermath of the action in the Baltic were merely a continuation of this process.

In a spectacle reminiscent of the darkest days of Stalinism, the official media built up to a crescendo of hysterical lies during the military action. (Interestingly, western journalists reported an enthusiasm on the part of the foreign ministry to get them into the Baltic region to report what was really going on – a further sign of the deep divisions within the ruling establishment.)

On the final decision to send the army into Vilnius, there can again be little doubt about who was responsible: the general command and the political leadership in Moscow.

The army went in on 7 January to 'enforce conscription'. The next day they had gone into action, placing the press building 'under protection' amid talk about how Lithuania's elected government was attempting to 'restore a bourgeois state' – the very least one could say is that this was a rather strange way to 'enforce conscription'. The massacre on 'bloody Sunday' 13 January was, regardless of who gave the final orders to open fire, a logical consequence of the entire trajectory of the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev over the past year.

Glasnost hangs in the balance

The future of glasnost hangs in the balance. The principal architect of the policy has begun to dig its grave. But it would be wrong to conclude that a return to neanderthal Stalinism at home and the cold war abroad will be the automatic outcome of the process now under way.

In relation to foreign policy the overriding concern continues to be the maintenance of an international environment conducive to the solving of domestic problems. This is even more the case given the recent escalation of the domestic crisis. In this sense it would not be particularly brave to predict business as usual on the international front, with one qualification.

The qualification relates to the increasing influence of the military establishment over policy, which may well have some effects. Already senior military voices have questioned the arrangements for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from eastern Germany, for example, and Shevardnadze's departure was in part the result of battles between the military and the foreign ministry. But a return to the approach of the Brezhnev era on foreign policy looks extremely unlikely.

On the Gulf, in spite of criticisms from some military figures, Soviet complicity in the imperialist assault has already been bought and paid for in hard currency – \$4bn of hard currency to be precise, paid in loans and aid by the oil-rich Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia in return for the USSR's backing of the key UN Security Council resolution on the use of force ('Both sides expressed satisfaction at business concluded' – *Financial Times*).

The appointment of the liberal career diplomat Alexander Bessmertnykh as Shevardnadze's replacement at the foreign ministry on 15 January (two days after bloody Sunday in Vilnius) was clearly a move designed to demonstrate to the west the continuity of foreign policy. He has spent 11 years in Washington and is regarded by the US administration as a loyal follower of Shevardnadze. Further moves to reassure the

recognition of this among all sections of the bureaucracy.

In this context it is, at the very least, possible that an attempt could be made to drive ahead forcibly with moves towards marketisation, and even full-scale capitalist restoration, in the context of political 'poryadok', whatever the short-term retreats Gorbachev has been forced to make while concentrating on reimposing order on the rebellious republics.

In an editorial last December, the *Economist* commented 'It might ... be the Soviet Union's turn for what could be called the [former Chilean dictator] Pinochet approach to liberal economics'. That journal, at least, appears to be under no illusions that the introduction of capitalism must automatically be associated with political liberalism or democracy. Such a connection exists only in the heads of woolly-minded liberals.

In fact it would be more accurate to say that in the Soviet Union today the maintenance and extension of democratic freedoms and decisive moves towards a market economy are mutually exclusive options.

But to carry through perestroika at the expense of glasnost, Gorbachev would face two major problems. First, the forces with which he is in alliance in the process of restoring 'order' are not in general those who are keenest for market-oriented reforms and, by the same token, some of those most enthusiastic about the market have democratic scruples about the turn to authoritarianism.

This could, however, change. It is interesting for example that Valentin Pavlov, confirmed as prime minister on 14 January and widely held to be a conservative, said that he saw his main task as 'smoothing the transition to market relations'.

The second, and much more intractable problem he would face is that the 'order'-restoring process itself is far from over. The attempt has only just begun: and it appears to have faltered at the first step.

The extent and depth of opposition to the attempted crackdown in the Baltic, both in the republics themselves and, crucially, in the Soviet Union as a whole, clearly took Gorbachev by surprise. After over five years of glasnost, the Soviet people are not going to give up their new-found political freedoms without a tremendous struggle.



US and imperialist world opinion generally that the USSR can be a reliable ally (at the right price, of course) can be expected.

In relation to the possible course of developments within the USSR, it is necessary to look beyond immediate appearances to the basic processes and fundamental forces at work. It is undoubtedly the case that sections of pro-market reformers have abandoned Gorbachev in the wake of his turn to the authoritarian right – but that is not the whole story.

It would be a mistake to assume that the political divisions are only, or even fundamentally, between democratic pro-market reformers on the one hand and authoritarian pro-central planners on the other, and that Gorbachev has lined up behind the latter group.

The forces demanding order have not only been the military and backward-looking apparatchiks: some pro-market reformers, such as Anatoly Sobchak, have long been calling for 'poryadok' (order imposed by a strong state) in order to enforce reforms against the resistance of apparatchiks and workers.

The depth of the economic crisis is such that no simple return to the old command methods is either possible or credible in the medium to long term. There is an increasing

Now Bush comes gunning for Castro

Sam Stacey

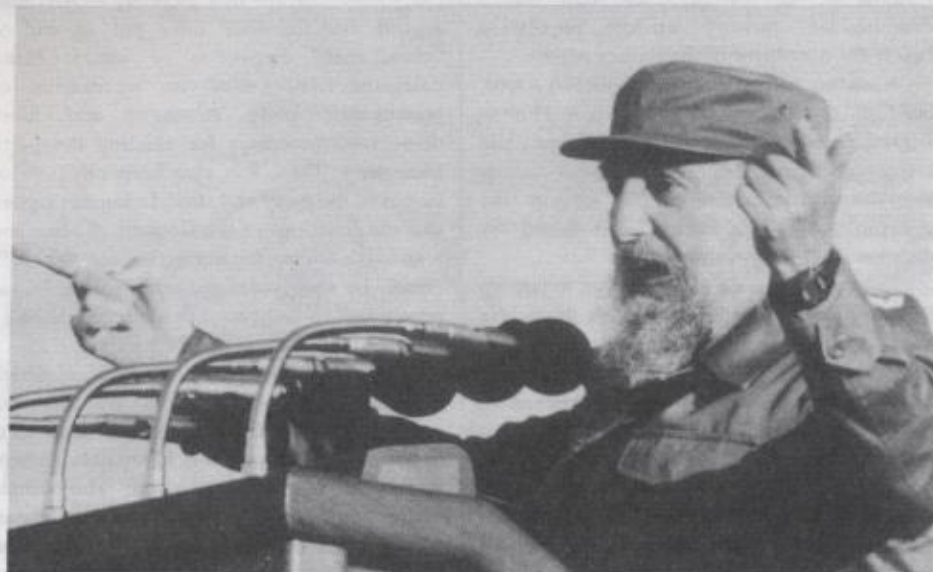
1991 will see a Congress of the Cuban Communist Party. It is liable to be an unusual affair in the wake of events in Eastern Europe. With the "collapse of communism", the attentions of American imperialism, fresh from the Nicaraguan elections, have been centred on Cuba, its prime target.

In Miami in the Cuban exile centre, car bumpers sprouted stickers saying "next Christmas in Havana". At any rate US imperialism has set out to step up its pressure on Cuba, in the knowledge that events in Eastern Europe have had a material impact on the already blockaded Cuban economy.

The White House is now waging a campaign to block loans to Havana and to prevent allies trading with Cuba. This led, to take a couple of examples, to Japan cutting sugar imports, and a Spanish firm ready to invest millions into the tourism industry, pulling out. In July, Bush made western assistance to the Soviet Union contingent on cutbacks in Soviet aid to Cuba.

The House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee has proposed amendments to further restrict foreign subsidies of US companies that trade with Cuba (trade estimated at \$250 million); to allow for seizure of any vessel in US ports which has engaged in trade with Cuba in the last 180 days, and to reduce economic assistance to importers of Cuban sugar.

Already the Cubans have made preparations for a dire economic situation which they face – "a special period in peacetime", which amounts to virtual wartime measures. It would be declared if Soviet oil deliveries are reduced from the present 12 million tons to 8 million or below. Castro warned that in such a situation they would have to "halt all social development programmes, which means the construction of schools, day care centres, clinics, houses ... for perhaps one, two, three,



four or five years". Electricity consumption would be halved, and state resources would be channelled to export agriculture, nickel mining, tourism and other production to generate hard currency.

The achievements of the Revolution are dismissed out of hand by its opponents as simply a result of Soviet money. Such assistance has been crucial, that is true. However, since 1986 Cuba has paid *above* the market price for Soviet petroleum. *Prazitelstvennii Vestnik*, the weekly magazine of the Soviet Council of Ministers, has reported that in 1988 Cuba paid 1.9 billion roubles above market price for Soviet goods – 1.3 billion for oil, 0.6 billion for machinery, equipment and transportation.

The Cubans are now faced with not only the possibility of less goods from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but with paying more for them. Moreover they face a situation where previously reliable sources are more sporadic. The impact is already being felt.

Cuba's bus system was crippled when their Hungarian supplier began demanding hard currency for spare parts. The supply of light bulbs from Poland has dried up. Bulgarian chickens and canned food imports were cut, leaving supermarket shelves even more bare. The sugar industry depends on computer and other high-tech equipment from what was East Germany. Its electrical equipment is mostly Czech.

Sporadic supplies of industrial imports and petroleum have led to plummeting productivity and some factories (such as one Havana electronics plant which failed to fulfil its plan for lack of Soviet components) are operating at just 40-50% of capacity according to Cuban economist Jose Luiz Rodriguez.

In early 1990 shipments of wheat and chicken feed failed to arrive on time, owing to rural strikes in the Ukraine. As a result bread and eggs became scarce, leading to tighter rationing and an unprecedented raising of the

price of these staples.

Whilst a new trade agreement with the Soviet Union was signed in April, with an increase over the previous year of 8.7%, the Cubans are obviously worried about the reliability of their supplies. According to a report in *Izvestia*, some Soviet enterprises are already trying to get out of the Cuban market. Soviet administrators complain that exports to Cuba require special packaging, tropical modifications and extra documentation. The report commented:

"Given the greater headaches, what is the point when an enterprise is going to get the same roubles from Cuba as it does working for domestic customers?"

Soviet Vice president Leonid Abalkin answered criticism of the deal from some parliamentarians:

"We have to bear in mind who gave us a helping hand after the Armenian earthquake and who has taken in our children from the Chernobyl tragedy. These are incompatible gestures. One has to have a healthy, sensible mind and not be a vulgar merchant."

However, with marketisation breaking down state control, and giving greater freedom to individual enterprises it seems inevitable that more and more of them will pull out of deals with Cuba, at least when contracts run out.

In any case the 'grace' period which Cuba was granted on its debts to the Soviet Union, estimated by *Izvestia* at 24 billion roubles, soon expires. Pressure for repayment is liable to be stepped up.

By any standards this is a dire situation. Anybody expecting a simple repeat of events in Eastern Europe however, will (risking a prediction) be disappointed or disproved. The Castro leadership has an incomparably greater moral authority and support amongst the populace, not only because it was an indigenous revolution (rather than one imposed by Soviet tanks) but because of the genuine

benefits of the revolution to what was a downtrodden, poverty stricken population before the overthrow of the Batista regime.

A leading Cuban dissident, Gustavo Arcos, head of the Cuban Committee for Human Rights, caused a furore among the Cuban exile community when he conceded that a considerable part of the people support the government and its leaders, and called for dialogue with the government.

The Cuban masses are not about to rise up to overthrow Castro, even though there is a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy. *However, the defence of the gains of the revolution are undermined by the politics of the Communist Party and state bureaucracy which weighs on the backs of the populace.*

But the monolith of the CCP and the apparatus of government is being prised open by the realities which Cuba has to face. In March the CCP issued a call for widespread discussion on preparation for the Fourth Party Congress to be held in the first half of 1991. This was a departure from the past because it did not offer the Cuban Party Politburo's agenda for resolving the problems. It spoke instead of public analysis and debate of alternative policies. Unanimity (known as "democratic unity") was rejected in favour of tolerance of diverse opinions.

A round of meetings, to open up this debate were organised in April. However, nobody risked saying what they thought. Speakers rose to give paeons of praise to the leadership.

Carlos Aldana, the head of the CC's Department of Revolutionary Orientation (which usually works out the 'line') stopped these sessions, so disastrous were they. Obviously many people were sceptical of the party leadership's sincerity. Some believed it was public relations, others feared a trap for opposition elements.

At any rate a month later new meetings of provincial party and mass organisations were organised. Some of the proceedings were televised. The floodgates opened. Daily, people could see sharp criticisms of economic institutions, bureaucracy, ineffective political structures and policies. The debate hooted up.

A June 23rd Politburo statement set up some limits to the discussion, denouncing the idea that there was no democracy without a multiplicity of parties.

In July the debate was extended into the workplaces where not only national issues, but local problems were given vent to. Issues previously considered too problematic for public discussion were given an airing.

The legislative assemblies, the 'People's Power', were criticised as formalistic, impotent at the local level and unrepresentative at the national level. The structures of the CCP are also being scrutinised. The official newspaper *Granma* reported that at a Havana

party assembly, the first secretary of Artemisa argued that the CCP must put an end to "clandestine" discussion of issues. Many delegates have called for elimination of bureaucratic party structures and more democratic processes for electing the party leadership. There has also been criticism of fusion of the party and state. Delegates argued that the functions of the Council of State and legislative bodies, the ministries, and the CCP, should be clearly defined and distinct. "Conservatives" in the party have been attacked by the UJC (the youth wing of the Party).

The bureaucratic structures, which dominate the country politically and economically, form an insuperable barrier. It is clear that further development is impossible without a process of democratisation. The debate taking place within the CCP has at its heart the question of whether they can afford to make reforms, or whether they can afford *not* to. There has been a debate amongst marxists

Most importantly its defence is linked to the revolutionary struggles of the Latin American masses, for without a revolutionary breakthrough on the continent, Cuba cannot hold out indefinitely in the new conditions

as to whether the problem of bureaucracy in Cuba means that a political revolution to kick it out of power, is necessary. (This author thinks it is.) It may be argued that there is no bureaucracy, as a distinct social group whose interests are separate from and opposed to those of the working class. But it would be pretty difficult for anybody to deny the absolutely bureaucratic, anti-democratic structure of the CCP and its state apparatus.

On one thing the CCP bureaucracy is certain: the single party monopoly is not up for discussion. Even some reform-minded Party members are worried that moves to a multi-party system would threaten the gains of the revolution. But in the last analysis, the defence of these gains can best be achieved through the working class assuming direct power which at present is monopolised by the CCP.

How does the experience of Eastern Europe relate to this question? Trotsky, writing of the political revolution in the Soviet Union, spoke about the ending of the single party monopoly, and the right of formation of "soviet parties" – those that defended the gains of the revolution. The working class, he said, would determine what were "soviet parties".

However, given the unexpected longevity of Stalinism and the degree to which it soiled and bloodied the name of socialism and communism, the masses in Eastern Europe developed illusions in parliamentary democracy. Though this has meant the freedom for pro-capitalist parties to emerge, to have opposed the growth of a "multi party system" under such circumstances would have

isolated the minuscule forces of the left even more than they are.

The workers in these countries will only begin to adopt a class approach on the basis of class differentiation becoming clearer, and as a result of having to face the realities of the attempts to "marketise" these economies. This is one of the painful overheads of Stalinism.

In Cuba there is much more of an anti-imperialist consciousness, threatened as they have been by US imperialism on their very doorstep. Bourgeois democracy does not have such a resonance as in Eastern Europe. Certainly a "multi party system" in the sense of capitalist democracy *would enable imperialism to organise unfettered, in Cuba.* However, it is not just this that the regime opposes, but *workers democracy* – the right of organised opinion within the working class; the right to organise different parties and organisations *within the camp of defence of the gains of the revolution*; the right to form unions independent of the state and CCP.

These are demands which revolutionaries should raise; demands which will surely find expression as the debate hots up. The greater the resistance of the bureaucracy, the more certain it is that workers will be forced to build an alternative outside the CCP.

All those who argue that challenging the monopoly of the CCP will play into the hands of imperialism, are in practice acting to undermine the defence of the revolution, which requires a revolutionary mobilisation of the working class – which in turn calls for a democratisation of Cuban society.

Most importantly *its defence is linked to the revolutionary struggles of the Latin American masses, for without a revolutionary breakthrough on the continent, Cuba cannot hold out indefinitely in the new conditions* – especially if the aging Fidel Castro, who sits atop the clique which dominates the bureaucracy, were to die. The reliance on diplomacy does not serve the defence of the revolution, especially since it rests on maintaining friendly relations with capitalist governments in Latin America and elsewhere. To take the latest example, Cuba has continued more or less to lend political support to the bourgeois PRI government in Mexico, even *after* its recent outrageous electoral fraud.

For socialists and opponents of imperialism in Europe it is crucial to work for the defence of Cuba.

In Britain, in the Labour Party and unions, that requires a battle against the "special relationship" with "our US allies" which Kinnoch is so keen to continue. The possibility of a Labour government means that the demand for a break with the US blockade of Cuba, and for a Labour government to provide aid without strings, are demands which must be raised now, and fought for should they come to office.

Concession and repression in South Africa

Almost a year after the release of Nelson Mandela, much of the optimism about progress towards Black majority rule has evaporated amid the state-backed carnage unleashed against the liberation movement in recent months, reports MIKE PEARSE.

The "historic reforms" of De Klerk are beginning to look much more like the traditional pattern of concession and repression meted out by previous South African regimes.

In fact, the original concessions occurred not through a direct upsurge of the mass movement but against a backdrop of economic crisis and a worsening balance of class forces.

The importance of Gorbachev's "new thinking" and the end of the Cold War also played a key role. The withdrawal of Soviet



De Klerk wants black people divided on tribal lines

material and financial backing increased the pressure on the ANC to find a settlement.

Equally the settlement of the Angolan conflict and the withdrawal of Cuban forces from the area strengthens South Africa's regional hegemony – as does the war of destabilisation which has driven some of the front-line states to the point of economic collapse.

With a big drop in the price of gold fuelling his own internal economic crisis at home, De Klerk was prepared to make some real concessions to attract foreign capital. The fact that new investment is again flowing into South Africa after a long lull suggests that the government has got what it wanted.

A year ago the Conference for a Democratic Future brought together supporters of Freedom Charter and Azanian tendencies in the liberation struggle for the first time in many years. Many present warned of the ANC of the dangers of entering negotiations from a

position of weakness. Some of their fears have now been confirmed.

Nelson Mandela's readiness to negotiate – he said there was no such thing as a non-negotiable issue – has been cruelly exploited by the regime. De Klerk's constitutional proposals have a cleverly democratic appearance, but fall a long way short of one person, one vote in a unitary state.

Based on a variant of the American system, the proposals advance a two-chamber set-up, one proportionally elected, the second being a "Senate" representing the different "ethnic groups" – including the whites – wherein each would have the power to veto laws made by the lower house.

Far from transferring power to the black majority, this arrangement aims to divide blacks on tribal lines and institutionalise the veto power of the whites.

Little progress has been made on dismantling other pillars of apartheid. Although the liberation organisations have been legalised, the attacks on them and, indiscriminately, on black people as a whole in recent months is itself a consequence of the deteriorating social and economic aspects of apartheid.

A recent issue of *Vukani Basebenzi* comments:

"At the heart of the brutality is the 'hostel/migrant labour system' which comprises the homelands policy of influx control, jobs and accommodation divided along racial 'ethnic' social and economic lines; less wages; unemployment, and lack of control over even basic means of existence. Squatting, overcrowded houses, lack of privacy, separated families, insanitary conditions all exacerbate the problem."

Mandela's response was to call on the state to protect black people. The problem is that it is precisely the state apparatus which is colluding in the brutality, arming the gangs and standing by while they go on the rampage.

An estimated one in five of the permanent members of the security forces are members of the racist Conservative Party or fascist AWB. To demand they protect blacks in these circumstances is to spread a dangerous il-

Anti Apartheid movement at the Crossroads

Despite the momentous changes taking place in South Africa/Azania in the last year, only 300 delegates attended the AGM of the Anti-Apartheid movement at the end of 1990, far fewer than in previous years.

For the AAM, 1990 was a year in which the movement stagnated, despite increased expenditure and hiring of more staff. The national demonstration at the start of the year was only a few thousand strong and there have been precious few central campaigning initiatives.

Instead the AAM has sought to use the openings of the last year to move from campaigning to international diplomacy. The result has been a decline in support and financial crisis. The movement is rolling over its debts on a month by month basis, at the same time as alienating its local support groups by

imposing on them an increased financial burden.

With Oliver Tambo hinting that the time is near when the campaign for sanctions could be ended, the AAM may soon find itself without a reason to exist. "Sanctions" has been its byword for decades – to the exclusion of direct links, trade union support, non-sectarian solidarity and a range of other approaches.

The 1990 AGM took place amid press reports of the imminent winding-up of the Movement. If the AAM is to remain relevant it must broaden out its solidarity to include support for all liberation movements – not just the ANC – and initiate the kind of grassroots trade union solidarity which proved so successful in the campaigns in support of the BTR workers and in defence of Moses Mayekiso.

lusion. Instead the liberation movement should mobilise blacks to protect themselves.

It was frustration with the conciliatory policy of the ANC that led its own members to strongly criticise the leadership at its first conference in South Africa in 30 years. Despite hints from the returning President Oliver Tambo that sanctions might soon be dropped, the ANC rank and file rejected such a concession – and demanded that the executive step up its commitment to campaign on behalf of ANC prisoners on death row.

Elsewhere the long-term alliance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party seems to be coming under strain. The Eastern Cape branch of the ANC has passed a resolution stipulating that ANC officers could not be members of the SACP.

The cadre of the SACP has historically occupied leading positions in the ANC. Both organisations are growing in the new conditions, the ANC on a mass basis, and the SACP benefitting from the influx of an important layer of trade union activists, notably NUMSA leader Moses Mayekiso.

It may seem ironic that the SACP is one of the few communist parties actually thriving rather than undergoing a deep crisis, particularly as it was for long one of the most un-reconstructed Stalinist parties in the world. But it has begun a remarkable volteface since the change of thinking in Moscow. Just over a year ago SACP General Secretary Joe Slovo published *Has Socialism Failed?*, the CP's attempt to come to terms with its Stalinist origins and practices.

Has Socialism Failed? obviously implies something of a re-think on the CP's policies and methods, which genuine socialists can use to widen the debate. But at 20 pages it is

grossly superficial and has been subjected to withering criticism by Baruch Hirson in the July edition of *Searchlight South Africa* for its willingness to skirt around many of the key issues raised by the legacy of Stalinism.

Considerable scepticism over the readiness of the SACP to change its spots has been expressed by others too. Pallo Jordan, ANC information officer, sparked off widespread discussion by his sharp criticism of the SACP in a number of journals, most recently, *Monitor*:

"Comrade Slovo maintains that the SACP has long ago turned its back on Stalinism. This may well be true for him and a few other individuals. But as a consequence of the Stalinist language which the SACP carried with it over the years, there is a spirit of extreme intolerance which is manifested regularly in the pages of its publications... What is sad is what many communist parties, including the SACP have done by identifying socialism and communism so narrowly with the authoritarian systems in Eastern Europe; they have discredited socialism. I, and many other socialists, feel very strongly about this.

"... In 1968, the suppression of the Prague spring was greeted enthusiastically by the SACP. They need not have done this. There were other instances – they applauded what Jaruzelski did to Solidarity in Poland, including martial law. This is completely foreign to the marxist tradition."

The ability of the SACP honestly to reexamine its past will be a yardstick of its capacity to broaden its political approach and appeal to the working class. In any event, the SACP's strategy of operating a division of labour with the ANC remains constant. With Mandela reiterating he is "not a socialist", it becomes even more critical for the SACP to

draw advanced workers into the ANC's camp.

Real socialist ideas are inevitably in the minority at this moment, particularly in view of the dangers in organising in some parts of the country. Last year an openly socialist organisation, the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action, was founded on a national basis, bringing together a number of important individuals and organisations, notably the Cape Action league.

Despite the difficult conditions, which include witchhunts and physical attacks on its members, WOSA produces a monthly socialist newspaper, *Vukani Basebenzi*. The key demand it currently advances is for a sovereign constituent assembly.

In the words of a recent article:

"The leaders of the ANC have no moral or political right to enter into compromises on behalf of all the oppressed people in this country. They have themselves made it clear that no matter how popular the organisation is, it is not the only representative voice of the oppressed and exploited majority of the people of South Africa. *This is a fundamental issue*. No amount of wishful thinking or manipulation of the media can alter the fact that there are three or four other significant currents that run in the broad river of the national liberation movement. It is for this reason that the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action insists that the only way in which a new constitution can be drawn up for South Africa/Azania is by a Constituent Assembly based on one person, one vote, and on proportional representation (where every single vote has an equal value). No other mechanism can give legitimacy to a new constitution".

Rebuild mass organisations from below

The following article is reprinted from VUKANI BASEBENZI, the paper of the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action

The wave of violence on the Reef has resulted in the disruption of the main organisations of the working class, particularly within the trade union movement. The calls for peace (from all quarters), while welcome, do not address the underlying causes of the violence.

The calls for the formation of self-defence committees, while correct, trail behind the spontaneous actions of the people on the ground. These self defence committees must quickly become responsible to democratic, non-sectarian street or area committees if we are to avoid their degeneration into anarchy or instruments of political control.

The mass killings and reign of terror are only possible under the objective conditions

created by the apartheid capitalist system – the hostel system separating city dwellers from those from the countryside, the homelands system which promotes a tribal/ethnic consciousness, the brutalising effect of poverty, powerlessness and overcrowding in the townships.

These conditions, coupled with a history of political intolerance and sectarianism, provide the fertile ground. But it is the deliberate provocation which leads to the cycle of attack and counterattack. The many reports of specific incidents indicate that the finger can be pointed at Inkatha, elements within the state structures and the right wing.

The mass destruction of homes, the attacks on the trains, the shooting and bombing at taxi ranks, the killing of whole families by silent faceless brutes amount to a massive attack on the self-confidence of the masses. mass structures are unable to function, trade unions – which are the most disciplined, democratic and cohesive mass organisations – are unable

to hold quorate meetings. NUMSA, the major industrial union in the country, had to call off a national strike ballot during the height of the wave of violence.

The wave of violence amounts to an offensive on the part of the state and its agencies aimed at weakening the working class movement and shifting the balance of forces in its favour. The potential damage to the liberation struggle cannot be overestimated.

As the strike reports on our pages show, organised workers, over a wide front, are still willing to take on the bosses and the state, in the face of intimidation and an economic recession. The working class is still able to fight and win battles.

But if we are to counter the long term effects of the wave of violence, it is the duty of every political and mass organisation to rebuild working class organisations from below, on the basis of non-sectarianism, unity and democracy.

Rebuild the mass organisations!

India in turmoil Manifestos give way to mass violence

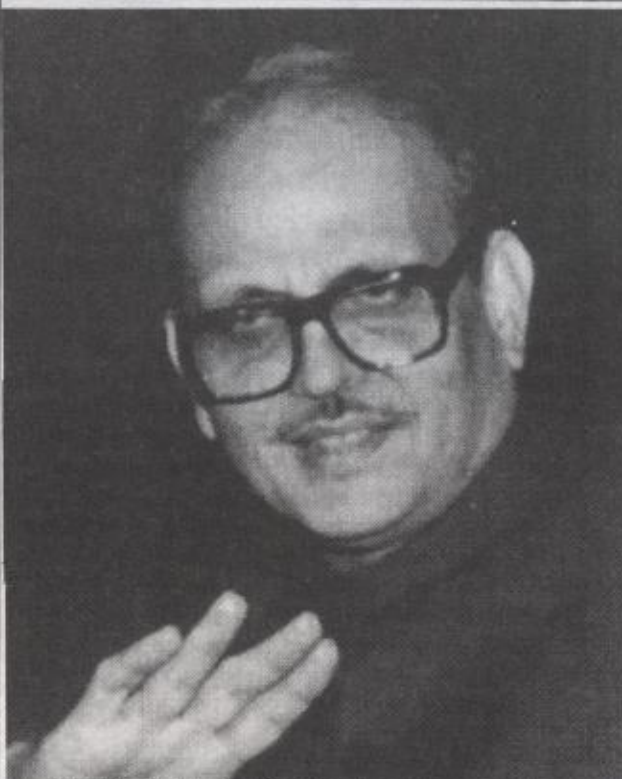
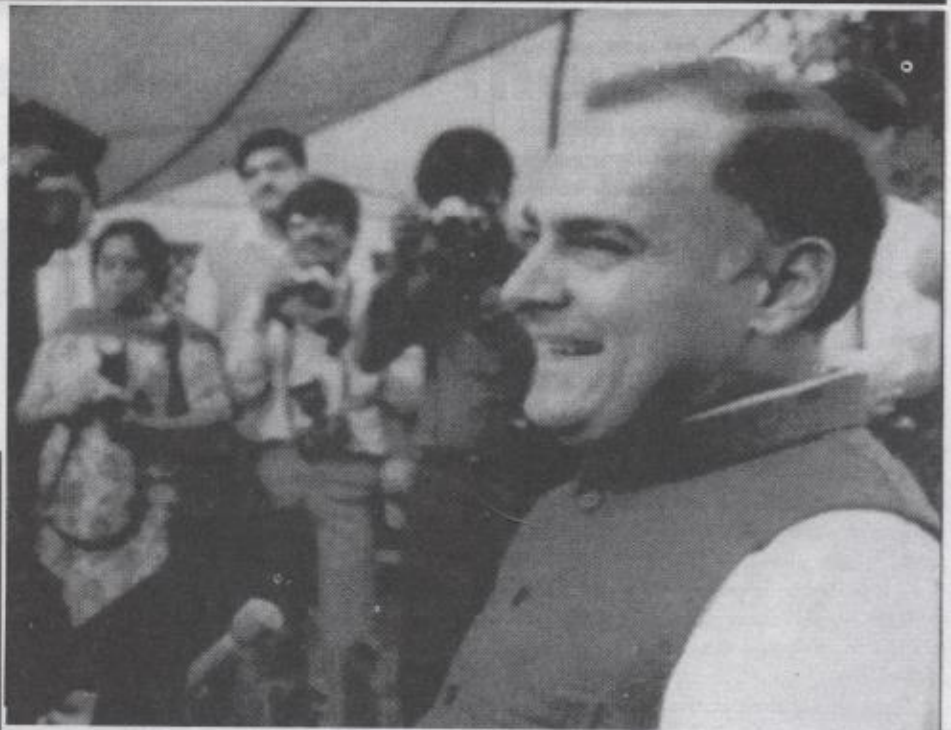
India is in danger of being trapped in the continuing downward spiral of murderous communal violence and political instability. In a country of 850 million folk, questions of nationality, religion and caste are inevitably entwined with political and economic questions, reports OLIVER NEW.

The Indian bourgeoisie has in recent years been trying with some success to break into and develop overseas markets. It has done so in collaboration with foreign capital, and its attempts to become the regional policeman – especially in Sri Lanka – have by and large met with imperialist approval.

However the development of national Hindu chauvinism has tied in with these projects, and although an insistence on secularism and democracy is necessary for stability, in recent years politicians have started to play the communal card more frequently and more blatantly.

The rise of the anti-Muslim Bharatiya Janata Party – BJP – as a major national force highlights the threat of growing reaction, but just as serious are the concessions made to communalism by ostensibly secular local and national parties and politicians. Equally serious are the tensions between Delhi and many Indian states which have been gathering momentum during the last few years, partly because of uneven economic development. Class and caste conflict have been developed and coloured by these problems, to help create an increasingly volatile mixture.

Recent events have led to thousands of people being slaughtered in riots which raise uneasy memories of partition in 1947. It is the underdog communities such as the Muslims or the Harijans ('untouchables') who are the usual victims. During a single week in December the traditionally tolerant university town of Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh saw 90 murdered and hundreds more treated for knife and axe wounds or burns arising from arson. Al-



Gandhi and Singh: neither have room for manoeuvre

most a hundred died in Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh.

According to *Indiamail*, although this old city had suffered from disturbances in the past, they were "never on the scale they are today, never so organised in the murders, never so gruesome, with women and children mown down or cut to pieces."

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar and other states have all suffered from the tide of violence. On top of this, struggles for autonomy in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam are being conducted with guns and met by state repression. In case all this isn't enough, the bitter feelings

aroused over job reservations for 'lower' castes and others led to riots by students, in which several poured petrol over themselves and struck matches.

Much of this hatred and slaughter can be laid directly at the door of politicians cynically seeking an excuse to widen their base of support during a period of severe political crisis. In reality, there is a wide measure of similarity to be found between the political manifestos of the national parties, even including the BJP on the right and the Communist Parties on the left. They all have a rhetoric which is in favour of the poor and the rural masses, but alliances have sometimes had as much to do with personalities and power brokerage as with policies.

Since the elections of November 1989, there has been a full circle on the political roundabout.

Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party – despite losing the vote – is now the main prop of the current minority Government, led by Chandra Shekar. Rather than see another election, Gandhi has made a deal with Shekar's splinter of the Janata Dal party. Between them they hold a parliamentary majority.

So the present Government of India (present, that is, at time of writing) consists of a tiny unelected party held in place by the monster Congress. Indeed, insofar as the last elections were seen by many as a referendum on Gandhi and Congress, its results have been

reversed. Thus Gandhi has now partially reaped the benefit of his cynical policy of drumming up religious antagonisms.

Before the elections, Congress deliberately stirred up Hindu communalism, notably by helping to revive the old Hindu-Muslim dispute over the Babri Mosque. But not only were the BJP better at championing Hindu fundamentalism, Congress also lost the support of millions of Muslims. As a result, Gandhi's Government was replaced by an anti-Congress alliance headed by V.P.Singh and supported by both the BJP and the left.

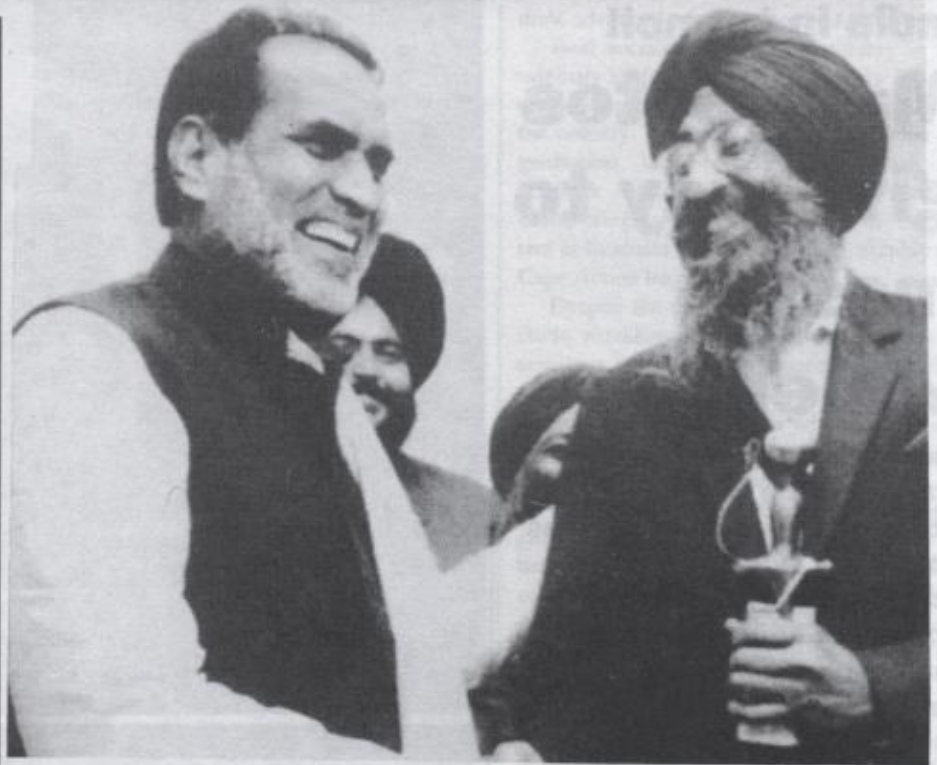
To stay in office, V.P.Singh had to do a balancing act and in particular, keep in hand the troublesome BJP. With this in mind he decided to implement a report calling for an expansion of the number of jobs in the public service reserved for 'lower' caste Hindus - a policy he hoped would have the advantage of switching the divisions from religion to caste and thus dividing the base of the BJP.

The ensuing riots across North India by 'upper' caste students led to the fall of the V.P.Singh Government after it lost a vote of no confidence moved by the BJP. The fact that it was the BJP that walked out of Singh's Government illustrates the growing confidence of Hindu communalism in India. It is the BJP, and the communalist organisations who want to be seen to go one step further, who have to insist on demolition of the Mosque to make way for their temple.

They posture at one and the same time as radicals with clear solutions and a fresh appeal, but also as the defenders of traditional Hindu life. Yet they have also shown themselves to be cynical pragmatic politicians. They are non-fundamentalist fundamentalists.

As for the Congress Party, whenever it decides the time is ripe, it has only to remove support from Chandra Shekar and another election will be precipitated which is not otherwise due for four years. The other parties have already started electioneering. The BJP continue to agitate around the Mosque/Temple issue, while V.P.Singh has made an alliance with the two Communist Parties and has been touring Bihar holding rallies at which according to *India Today* "he has given a clarion call for class war".

What is needed is not for politicians like Singh to spout leftism when it suits them, but the establishment of working class anti-communal organisations across India. Such a movement would have to be *against* the main political parties. A serious fight against communalism would have to challenge not only those who stir it up, which includes religious fundamentalists, but also national and local parties, business interests, and landlords.



Punjab:

State repression versus fundamentalism

By Oliver New

The Sikh fundamentalists have quite a narrow base of support in Punjab, but they continue to benefit from a crisis in which state repression and terrorism feed off each other.

In some areas they have set up their own courts and they have attempted to intimidate and murder not only their political opponents, but those of whom they disapprove. Women have been told they must wear traditional dress, traders have been told to stop selling tobacco and alcohol; teachers, journalists and broadcasters have been told to stop using Hindi.

Criminals have been taking advantage of the instability, one estimate is that 90% of so-called terrorist crime is carried out by criminals for gain. There is no dividing line between youth genuinely attracted by the radical appeal of the Khalistani movement and those who use the gun for personal gain.

Furthermore, the prolonged period of crisis in Punjab has led to the growth of close links not merely between the militant fundamentalists and criminals, but also between both and the police. Some landlords have a strong vested interest in the situation.

The army has been brought in to try to restore confidence in the ability of the state to keep control, but it has no political legitimacy.

Direct rule from Delhi will end only when elections are held, and most of India's national parties are reluctant to see an election in which they expect to perform badly. They have earned themselves nothing but hatred through their policy of naked repression and their failure to search for a solution.

Only the Communists have campaigned sincerely against communalism, many paying the price of assassination. The deadly-dull TV soaps with predictably happy endings for communal harmony are certainly not the stuff to win hearts and minds.

The national parties know it would be hard to pick up a sizeable Hindu vote: it is not there to be won. The 1981 census showed 52% Sikhs in the Punjab to 46% Hindus. Today the figures are estimated to be 68% to 30%. Many Hindus have migrated out of Punjab and many more Sikhs and Hindus have moved into the towns for safety, often not registering themselves.

The rise of the Hindu fundamentalism has correspondingly strengthened the hand of the Khalistanis. The successive governments in Delhi are more interested in placating them than developing a democratic anti-communalist policy. There is therefore a crying need for a grass roots movement of the left to break the circle of state repression and communalism.

Unstable yet durable – the paradox of Indian democracy

*The Painful Transition –
Bourgeois Democracy in
India*

Achin Vanaik
Verso £9.95

**Reviewed by Dave
Palmer**

Achin Vanaik, the leading *Times of India* journalist, a Marxist and supporter of the Inquilabi Communist Sanghathan (Indian section of the Trotskyist Fourth International) has produced a major new study of the India's economy and politics.

Vanaik's work brings a theoretical originality and assured grasp to the understanding of the process of combined and uneven development on the sub-continent. This makes it essential reading for all those wishing to grasp the course of events in the most complex society on the planet.

With the weak government of VP Singh recently replaced by even feeble administration, Indian society and body politic to many observers appears riven by irresolvable tensions. How does a revolutionary build a Marxist framework for comprehending events in the world's largest, and poorest, bourgeois democracy?

Should we think of India as a dependent "third world" country dominated by an imperialist world order which blocks its development? view communalism as a clash of backward "pre-modern" identities, to be swept aside by the advance of capitalism social relations? conceptualise its rural social relations as largely "feudal"? view India as a "multi-national state" which could easily break up or be further partitioned? regard its electoral politics and parliamentary governance as a shaky facade verging of collapse? consider that the army may take over in a crisis or that a authoritarian Hindu chauvinist regime is a real possibility? see the hugely oppressed



Indian masses ready to rise in revolutionary action if just given the right lead?

To these all questions both, theoretical and immediate (unfortunately including the last), can be given a definite no.

Vanaik's analysis sweeps away many common misconceptions concerning India. It provides the observer of contemporary India with the theoretical spectacles to make the conjuncture of events explicable. His overview is intricate, many layered and highly innovative. This subject matter is complex and multi-faceted, and for most of the Western left is unfortunately almost totally unfamiliar.

Vanaik argues Indian capitalism is both weak and backward yet neither dependent upon, nor (directly) dominated by imperialism.

He contends that, "There is no major capitalist country in the Third World which has a more powerful state than India's or an indigenous bourgeoisie with more autonomy from foreign capital" Imperialism or foreign capital (a

tiny proportion of the economy) have no meaningful place in the dominant class relations in India. The two dominant classes of the Indian social formation are the agrarian bourgeoisie – a developing capitalist farmer class which dominates rural social relations and politics – and the industrial bourgeoisie, predominately concentrated in state industry and the long standing private monopolies.

State sector

Indian capitalism though weak, backward and inefficient has been able to embark upon the path of autarchic and bureaucratically administered development due to the vast potential size of its internal markets. The huge and predominant state sector (of the top 50 companies only 7 are private), state directed investment



funds and resources have been used as the main instruments nurturing industrial and commercial capital formation and growth. The agricultural bourgeoisie have been the main beneficiaries of the governmental system of agricultural subsidies and "floor pricing".

This dynamic of development based on the urban and rural elites – the "top 200 million" with the vast urban middle class providing the main market for consumer goods – however creates barriers to the growth of

domestic demand and economic growth. The "alliance" between the rural and industrial bourgeoisies has become increasingly unstable as the rural bourgeoisie's influence has grown. With 70% of the population in the countryside, the rich farmer-led peasant voting bloc is continually used to contend with the industrial bourgeoisie in the "share out" of the resources allocated by the Indian state. This was the main cause of the breakup of the Congress monolith.

Authoritarian

Vanaik's main thesis is that India is in transition from one variant of bourgeois democracy to another - more authoritarian -form. This is expressed in the apparent paradox that Indian politics are characterised by unceasing instability within a highly durable framework. Yet the fracturing of Congress and its loss of political hegemony means it has also become incapable of a forming stable national government.

Vanaik argues that Indian's "national" bourgeoisie - its core component being its industrial bourgeoisie - has able to complete the tasks of the "bourgeois revolution" (agrarian reform, national independence, establishment of a bourgeois democratic regime plus a high degree autonomous industrialisation) to a degree unaccounted for in the "standard" interpretation of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution thesis (Mandel, Lowy).

Vanaik's argument that the Trotskyist tradition should review its current thinking on Permanent Revolution and the degree to which the tasks of the bourgeois revolution can be completed clearly has major ramifications for revolutionary strategy in the less developed countries.

The high degree of political and economic autonomy of the Indian bourgeoisie meant, that unlike China and Vietnam, communism and nationalism never fused in India. This has particularly ruinous consequences for the strategies of the Indian Communist Parties both in relation to



All leaders use communalism - with horrendous results

the pre-independence Congress national movement and in the post-colonial Indian state.

Externally Vanaik holds that the Indian state is becoming an ever more hegemonic power in the South Asian region and will derive increased global status from this role. It has the world's fourth largest army and has raised its military spending by 250% in the last decade. Both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers.

The very factors that make it possible for the Indian state to achieve regional eminence also make it difficult for it to achieve real global authority. South Asia has been of little strategic importance to the USA and Western imperialism, hence the ability of India to sustain its non-alignment and regional pre-eminence.

'Nation-state'

Vanaik reviews Marxist theories of nationalism and their application in the Indian context. He argues India is not a multi-national state (like the USSR) but a "nation-state" which has largely "solved" the "national question". He argues no necessary opposition exists between India's many sub-national regional linguistic identities and a pan-Indian national identity. Most of the regional movements for autonomy (primarily language based) have not constituted national movements.

The most original and trenchant section of the book is that on the role of communalism, religion and their relationship to Indian bourgeoisie democracy. He con-

tends that "the most powerful candidates for nationhood in India have been religious, not linguistic communities." His approach is in sharp contrast to traditional (and again "stagist") Marxist notions of the advance of capitalism, bourgeois democracy and secularism modeled on the "European capitalist experience".

Hindu nationalism

In modern India any party can only win governmental power through appealing to a bloc of class, communal, regional and class identities. Though the "Hindustan" chauvinists of the B.J.P. may shift the political spectrum to the right, it is a restrained Hindu nationalism which is set to advance. Thus in India, the "spread of Hindu nationalist appeal and adoption of a modulated cultural nationalism by mainstream bourgeois parties are not incompatible with preservation of the broad structures of bourgeois democracy". The Indian state can be characterised as non-communal rather than secular. There is an urgent need for a new socialist definition of secularism and for the left to fight for secularisation of civil society.

Lastly on "agencies for change" Vanaik pinpoints the primary obstacle to working class self-activity in the extreme fracturing and lack of autonomy of the Indian trade union movement. There are over 38,000 registered unions, and each political party has a trade union wing, while the state enmeshes the unions within a corporate structure of industrial relations legislation.

Advance for the left can only arise through the linkage of urban/rural proletariat around a broad social agenda. Effort must be directed towards forging an alliance between of rural proletariat and poor farmers around such issues as higher wages, lower food prices and socialization of productive inputs and resources.

Finally some minor criticisms of this excellent work. The chapter on the Indian economy (unfortunately the first) contains many lists of indigestible statistics. Vanaik outlines the ideas of far too many thinkers, often for no apparent purpose, rather than sticking to the main models he wishes to consider.

Its a pity the cancerous role of caste - uniquely Indian, ancient and all pervasive - highlighted recently by the riots by upper caste students against the Mandal Commission recommendations, is not specifically addressed.

Lastly, he gives little clue as to the existing social and political vehicles for his clearly enumerated set of tasks for revolutionary transformation.

Of course none of the above detracts from Vanaik's study being essential reading, for any serious student of the politics of South Asian sub-continent.

ACHIN VANIAIK will be touring Britain from the end of March to promote his book. Meetings in Scotland and London are already planned, and hopefully others will be arranged. If you are interested in finding out about, or helping to organise, something in your area, please contact 'International Forum on Asia', 43 West End Rd, Southall or phone Oliver on 081 571 5019

PR: an act of faith?

Pete Willsman was right in suggesting that Davy Jones' article on PR required a response (*Socialist Outlook* No. 29). Unfortunately, his was not the one to be expected from readers of a "revolutionary marxist" journal.

Jones' contention, "that PR would help the mobilisation of a real popular majority to win elections and introduce socialism", may well be an act of faith as Willsman argues, but not in the sense that he meant. For both are arguing from within a context of parliamentary reformism – quite legitimately in Willsman's case. However, Jones a supposed Trotskyist, cannot seriously claim such a description at the same time as suggesting a parliamentary road to socialism.

I am not necessarily suggesting that marxists should not give critical support to PR – we should give no blank cheques to the institutions of bourgeois democracy. However, the questions to be raised over PR include such problems as whether it would give workers and the oppressed greater control over their lives or whether it would help to break the hold of reformism. One can debate PR in this sort of context without any illusions that a change in the forms of capitalist democracy would allow a socialist transformation of society.

Perhaps one can look to *Socialist Outlook's* perspective of building the Socialist Movement with (amongst others) reformist

elements outside the Labour Party for an explanation of Jones' attitude to PR?

**Geoff Coleman
Hull**

We welcome letters on any subject: but please keep them brief! Letters over 400 words will be cut. Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Where were the Trots?

Phil Hearse's obituary of Louis Althusser (*Socialist Outlook* No.29) is a well balanced piece, and for Trotskyists I think that is a bit of a problem. However useful some aspects of Althusser's project may, or may not, have been, its core was an attempt to rejuvenate Stalinism in a more acceptable, because more academic and more abstract, mode.

Of course, as Hearse notes, Althusser did not actually engage with Trotskyism. Unlike Hearse however, I don't think Althusser's inability to see the 1986 version of Trotsky's philosophical writings was central to this. Rather surely it was the responsibility of the not inconsiderable number of Trotskyists organised in France during the peak of Althusser's influence?

**Keith Flett
Tottenham**

For a fortnightly Socialist Outlook!

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- ☆ Kinnock and Willis back imperialism to the hilt
- ☆ Tories slip Poll Tax announcement through

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