

**STRIKE
AGAINST
THE WAR!**

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Defend

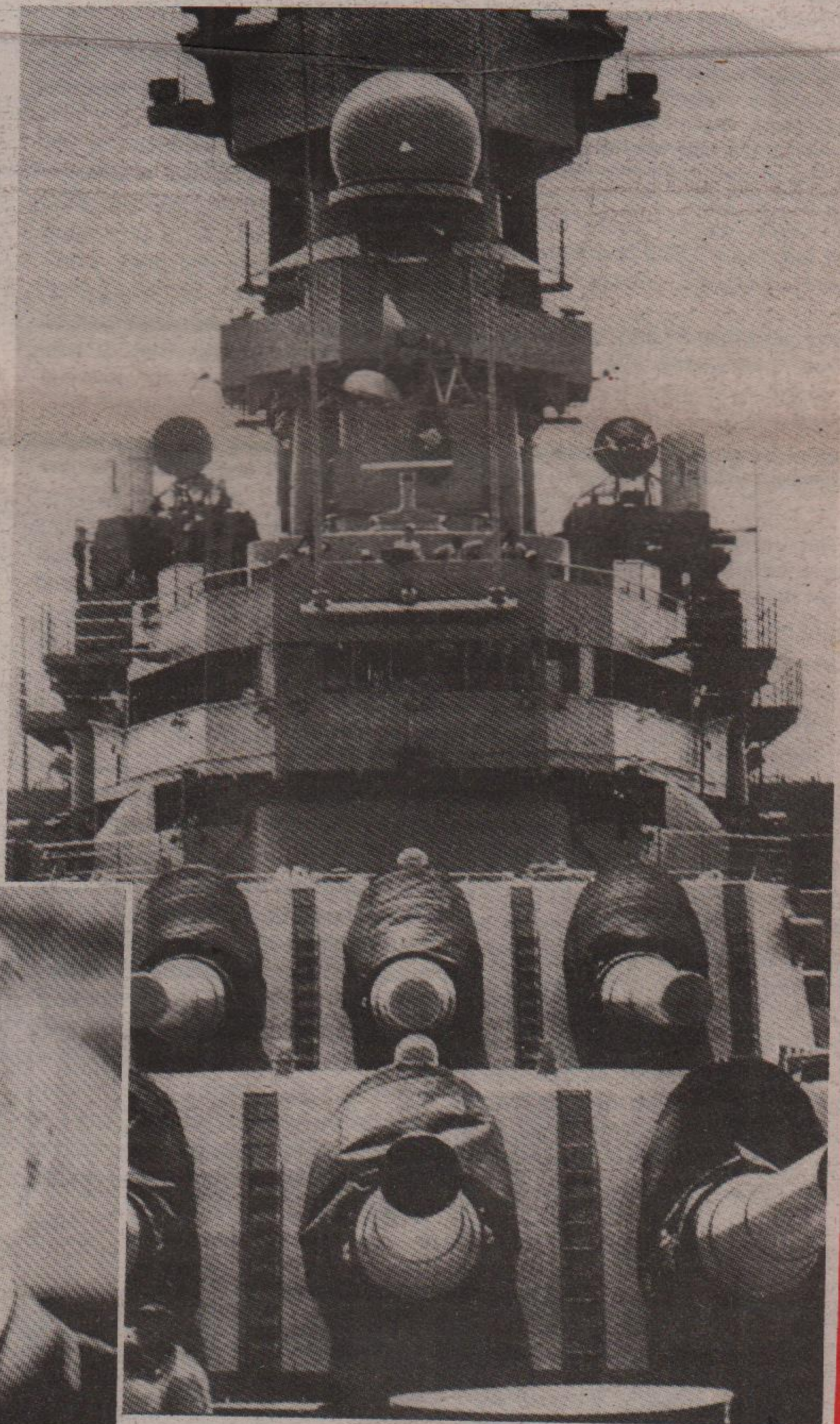
Iraq!

GEORGE BUSH and John Major have plunged the Middle East into war. It will last not weeks but months. In a single night British and US planes dropped explosives more powerful than the atom bomb at Hiroshima. Now a million soldiers will have to endure the biggest land battle of post war history—and for what?

Bush and Major say this is a war to “Free Kuwait”. They say thousands must die to defend the right of small nations against aggression. But they did not lift a finger when Indonesia invaded East Timor,

● Continued Page 3

Defeat



Imperialism!

GULF WAR: PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14 and CENTRE PAGES



TURKEY'S Minister of the Interior was furious at the "cowards" fleeing the south east of his country. This region would be the theatre of war if Turkey enters the conflict against Iraq. It would be the number one target for Iraq's Scuds. Yet, according to the Minister the people there should stay put. They will be quite safe from any gas attacks despite the complete absence of gas masks. It seems those masks, which reporters in Tel Aviv and Riyadh love to show off, are unnecessary. "Wet dishcloths over the face" can ward off the effects of a gas attack, the Minister announced.

TELEVISION took us all into the cockpit of an RAF Tornado during one of its raids into Iraq. The recording of the pilot's mission, and of his navigator steering him to his target, included every detail of their manoeuvre.

But one part was censored by TV executives. They were worried about obscenity. Not the obscenity of the bombs murdering Iraqis, but of the language used by the airmen. When one of the airmen said "thank fuck we're out alive" the television mercifully spared us by bleeping out "fuck". The bomb blasts were, of course, unexpurgated.

IN peacetime, TV light entertainment milks war for every laugh it can get. Turn on the TV normally and you'll get some programme celebrating or occasionally poking fun at a war situation: "It is all part of our culture" . . . except when there is a real war going on. As soon as the Gulf war began the TV companies set to work banning everything that might have made fun of, or shown the horrors of, war.

Monty Python had a sketch in it deemed offensive. Off it went. The film, *The Naked and the Dead*, was banned. 'Allo, 'Allo, that humourless farce about the Nazis in France, was taken off the air because it features a couple of British airmen shot down behind German lines. During peace time, it seems, it's funny to get shot down and Hitler's SS are a big joke.

Even *Coronation Street* has been banned from dealing with the war. "Life in the Street will go on as if the war wasn't happening" Granada announced.

THE radio hasn't been immune to Big Brother's interference either. Not surprisingly a best selling Algerian record in France called "Go for it Saddam" was quickly banned by the government. But you don't have to be so explicit to get taken off the airwaves in Britain. In case anyone is offended by that well known war-monger Lulu, the BBC have banned "Boom-Bang-a-Bang I Love You". Clearly pro-Iraqi that one. The subversive "Give Peace a Chance" is now forbidden along with Blondie's "Atomic", and many other harmless songs.

On the other hand the BBC sacked conductor Mark Elder for suggesting that they might give *Rule Britannia* a miss at the Proms because of the Gulf crisis. Is it a case of "we only sing when we're winning"?

In war truth is always the first casualty – so the saying goes. But never before has truth been butchered in so cynical a fashion and with such technical expertise, writes Colin Lloyd.

The propaganda war

WHEN GEORGE Bush promised that the Gulf war "won't be another Vietnam" he wasn't just talking about the fighting. For Bush and Major one of the biggest "mistakes" America made in Vietnam was its failure to clamp down on independent press and television reporting.

Since then, both Britain and the USA have been perfecting ways to stop adverse reporting of war. During the invasions of the Malvinas, Grenada and Panama, they developed a system of government briefings and tight control over journalists at the front which is being strictly adhered to in the Gulf.

Morley Safer, who covered Vietnam for CBS, explained the essential difference:

"During the Falklands Mr Ian McDonald would give a press conference and be absolutely confident that no one in the room knew more than he did. Now, in Vietnam, the poor old briefer knew that everyone in the room knew more than he knew . . . at least those of us who'd been out of Saigon at all."

The imperialists' first line of defence against truthful reporting relies on the government briefing being the most reliable source of information and silencing any journalist leaving the Gulf equivalent of Saigon. The US and British military have already achieved the information equivalent of air supremacy over the media. They answer all but the tamest questions with the routine, "I am not able to share that information with you at present."

A Green Book of rules for British war correspondents now stipulates that "no pictures of casualties" amongst the allied forces or their victims can be shown. Pictures of the Israeli and Saudi victims of Iraq's scud attacks are shown in the press and on TV. This exemption is designed to incense people against Iraq. Yet the Pentagon, which is able to show accurate videos of laser bomb attacks, cannot give a single estimate of Iraqi civilian casualties. "Innocent victims" it seems, are the exclusive preserve of the allies.

The purpose of this systematic censorship is to shield workers from the truth and manipulate their thoughts and feelings. And while reporters may complain about the lack of information and the irregular briefings, they are themselves willing participants in the whole exercise of distortion. ■

human interest story behind the headline. Deep in the middle of the *Sun* report was a paragraph which read: "Experts say the airmen's bruised faces COULD have been caused by the blast of being ejected from the cockpit at 500 mph. But . . ."

And indeed, unreported by the *Sun*, TV pictures one day later showed a British pilot who had safely ejected over Saudi territory bearing exactly the same kind of facial injuries as the captured pilots. Look at the difference between reporting of allied and Iraqi military tactics. The morning after the first blitz on Baghdad the London *Evening Standard* reported 100% SUCCESS! The *Sun* told us that "50% of the Iraqi airforce has been destroyed". The Pentagon announced that the elite Republican Guard had been "decimated".

"WHY DIDN'T YELLOW BELLIES FIGHT?" asked a disappointed *Sun*. Later it was reported that the Iraqi raids were far from 100% successful. It was taking Iraqi ground crews "on average only 24 hours to get airfields back in action". Far from losing 50% of its airforce Iraq's confirmed air losses amounted to 41 out of over 800 planes after one week of fighting: fewer than one in twenty.

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Balance sheet

A truthful balance sheet of the blitz reveals that sound military sense had made the "yellow bellies" save their planes for later in the war. But such a balance sheet would have little propaganda value for the media. The British and US governments have used the media to control the emotional mood swings which accompany all wars. When they sensed too much euphoria at the beginning they engineered a swing towards pessimism. When pessimism threatened to turn into depression at the sight of our "Top Guns" mouthing pro-Iraq propaganda on video the media manipulators moved in with a new angle on the war: its de-humanisation. At every stage in the war when actual casualties or suffering have been seen there has been a flurry of stories concentrating on the technological aspect of the war. "PATRIOTS 4 SCUDS 0", one missile fighting another with human beings sitting back to watch the fireworks: this is the image the TV and press falls back on whenever real live casualties threaten to weaken the war fever. It is an image especially potent for a generation of youth reared on "shoot-em-up" video games.

Prepare

All this is to prepare us for the day when the war will revert to a World War One-style trench battle, killing tens of thousands. Then the press will be used to stoke up our anger at the Iraqis, it will urge the bombing of civilians to end the war and lessen the British casualties, it will summon up the "Dunkirk spirit". But despite the video technology that enables us to follow a Tomahawk Cruise to within feet of its target we will not be allowed a glimpse of this suffering until years after the war has finished. ■

RESTRICTIONS ON reporting are vital to the imperialist war effort. But the media, even without censorship, is not fundamentally at odds with the aims of the government spokesmen. The TV, radio and newspapers form a second, much stronger, line of defence against the truth about this war.

The first bombs had barely hit Baghdad when Murdoch editor Andrew Neil appeared on the BBC declaring, "this will be a television war; the newspapers just can't compete with live war reporting such as CNN's". But the newspapers don't aim to compete with the TV and radio. The Gulf War is the clearest example yet of the division of labour between the government, the papers and TV in the modern propaganda war.

The broadcast media gives the latest "facts"—albeit the facts as processed by military censors and the "self censoring" TV executives. Then the newspapers weave a complex tissue of lies, emotions, hatreds and fantasies around these facts. The papers' lack of up-to-date information is not a disadvantage in this process: it means they have no obligation at all to up-date or correct false information.

To complete the process the propaganda campaign conducted by the press becomes news itself. Government spokesmen assess the mass mood of "euphoria" or "disillusion" as part of the daily military balance sheet. In fact the only evidence of such "moods" comes from the copy generated by a few hundred pro-Tory journalists in the rare moments they emerge from their bars and restaurants.

Overlap

When it comes to war reporting and analysis there is a ready made overlap between the military and the press. Defence correspondents are useless to the bosses' press unless they are vetted, loyal supporters of the military and usually ex-officers themselves.

The experts on military strategy the press has dragged out from the various "Royal Institutes" are actively involved in military planning and advice to government. Their "objective analysis", reported as news, is no more objective than the MoD briefings themselves.

On top of this barrage of "respectable" pro-war propaganda there is a daily diet of jingoistic lies, racist filth and gutter journalism from tabloid papers. When Saddam Hussein parades captives on TV it is, we are told, sick propaganda. When the *Daily Mirror* publishes unsubstantiated



allegations that the same captives have been ruthlessly "brainwashed" it is, we are told, truthful reporting.

And, to divert us from the real war aims of the allies there is an endless range of stories that personalise the conflict by concentrating on Saddam Hussein himself. Over a million troops are in there to deal with a single savage and deranged man. By reducing the conflict to a "get Saddam" exercise the press are carefully and deliberately diverting workers' attention from questions about oil, about military bases in the Middle East, about the plight of the Palestinians—about the political issues that are at the centre of this conflict.

The most obvious bias in the reporting is the kind of language used. The Iraqis bomb Israel and it is an "outrage"; Britain bombs Iraq and it is a "sortie". US missiles are "smart weapons", Iraqi Scuds are "murderous missiles". But the gutter press is involved in a much more complex manipulation of public fears and feelings.

Look at the case of the first Scud missile attack on Israel. The *Sun*'s front page claimed these were "DEATH GAS BOMBS". Even before the edition hit the streets it was clear that the Scuds contained conventional explosives and that there were few casualties. But the morbid association between Israel, Jews and "death gas" sells papers. Not only did the headline stay but the *Sun*

THE GULF WAR

never corrected this report in any subsequent edition.

Look at the case of the British pilots paraded on Iraqi TV. It was a graphic example of the division of labour between TV and gutter press.

The TV showed clearly that the pilots had facial injuries and that they were reading prepared anti-war statements. This allowed the *Sun* to get to work exploiting the lurid fears and fantasies of the TV audience.

The *Sun* reported not just that the pilots were tortured but listed "TEN WAYS BEASTS TRY TO CRUSH THEM". Having spent months idolising the yuppie "Top Guns", the *Sun* had to provide an explanation as to why these "true Brits" cracked: they must have been drugged.

Always keen to look on the bright side however, the *Sun* reported that at least one pilot had "held out against Saddam's evil torturers" whilst the others caved in. *Sun* and *Star* reporters formed the familiar scrum outside the houses of relatives of the POWs, vying for the

● Continued from Front Page

killing tens of thousands. They have done nothing about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank for over 20 years. And in Panama and Grenada it was the US Army itself which violated the rights of its weak and dependent neighbours.

They say it is a war to defend democracy. Let's hope no-one has told the Saudi and Kuwaiti princes or their Syrian, Iranian and Turkish allies! In every one of these countries fighting to defend democracy is a crime punishable by prison or death. In Israel this war to "defend democracy" has meant a 24-hour curfew for one and a half million Palestinians. Having denied the Palestinians gas masks, the Israeli state now denies them the right to leave their homes to get food and water.

When the war is over the allies will make peace with Saddam or some other Iraqi dictator, trampling on the democratic rights of the Palestinians, the Kurds and the Iraqi workers.

Whenever the imperialists are asked to explain their double standards, their hypocrisy and their change of heart towards Saddam (the man they once praised for standing up to Iran's Khomeini) they reply that now, with the world "united", it is time to establish a new order. Whatever the "mistakes" of the past, they say, we have to draw the line against aggression now, in the Saudi desert. There is not a shred of honesty in this argument.

If it is a war to restore peace and stability to the Middle East why are Major and Bush laying their plans now for a network of military bases in the Middle East after the destruction of Iraq? They know that the war's legacy will be years of conflict and instability. To keep the peace, once the present fragile coalition of Arab rulers collapses, Britain, France and the USA will have to maintain a permanent military presence. They will have to arm

friendly dictators to the teeth.

The real war aim of the Western powers is to ensure the continued exploitation of the workers of Middle East, the continued subservience of every local ruler to the imperialist armies and oil companies. It is being fought to ensure that a region rich in the world's most precious commodity remains poor, underdeveloped and dependent on imperialist handouts.

This is a war against the democratic rights of the workers and peasants of the Middle East. It is a war against the right of self determination for nations like the Palestinians and the Kurds.

That is why the workers of the entire world have to unite in action to stop it.

Already millions have taken to the streets in Europe, in North Africa, and the USA. There have been spontaneous strikes, school boycotts and mass demonstrations from Italy to Islamabad.

But the response of the British workers' movement has been pathetic. The Labour Party's support for the war, its opposition even to a pause in the bombing, shows it is a bosses' party. It is no more committed to peace and democracy than Major or Thatcher, but dutifully pushes their ideas in the ranks of the working class.

The TUC, from its Congress House bunker, has said nothing. Individual union leaders from far right to so-called "broad left" have applauded the munitions workers doing overtime for the war effort.

It will be left to the ordinary workers and youth to stop the attack on Iraq.

Now the war has started it is no use pleading with our rulers to see reason. We have to talk to our them in the language the whole world is now speaking: the language of force.



In every town the anti-war committees should turn to the task of building strike action against the war with Iraq, to get the troops out, to stop the internment of Arabs and the racist harassment of Muslims.

We should boycott all war work and break the sanctions by sending unconditional aid to the Iraqis on the receiving end of the bombs and missiles.

The warmongers, from the right wing press to the Labour leaders will scream and shout about treason. They will point the finger and ask: "which side are you on?"

For workers and youth there can be only one answer. To avoid being traitors to our class we will support Iraq, unconditionally, until it defeats imperialism. Of course Saddam Hussein is a tyrant. We said it long ago when the US and British rulers were arming him to the teeth. We want to see Saddam overthrown. But by the Iraqi workers and poor peasants, not by the armies of imperialism.

Today a victory for imperialism will set back the struggle against tyranny and oppression. It will create the conditions for decades of exploitation and oppression of Iraq by the victorious imperialists. That is why, in this war, the main enemy of the Iraqi people is not Saddam Hussein. It is imperialism.

Workers and youth in Britain must join with the millions of Arab workers and peasants who suffer torment at the hands of imperialism every day in support for: Victory to Iraq against the imperialist alliance!■

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INTERNMENT What price democracy?

AMONGST THE first acts of the the British government has been the shameful violation of the democratic rights of political refugees, foreign students resident in Britain and British citizens from the Asian and Muslim communities. In addition the first steps are being taken to outlaw the voicing of support for Iraq.

In theory, the parliamentary politicians praise democracy as "the right of the minority to voice its opposition to the majority". In practice however "national security" and the "feelings of the majority" are cited as reasons for violating the lofty principles of democracy when war breaks out.

First of all the threat of terrorism was whipped up by the gutter press. Soon our cities would be subjected to the bloody carnage of a bombing campaign by Iraqis and Palestinians.

Screaming

The gutter press was soon screaming that all Iraqis and Palestinians should be rounded up and put in concentration camps on Salisbury Plain. "Of course not" said government spokespersons and then proceeded to do it cautiously and step by step.

Now there are 47 Iraqis and seven Palestinians in Pentonville and Wormwood Scrubs. A further two prisoners are being held at military barracks. Fifteen Iraqis have already been deported.

Police and immigration officers have been carrying out raids using the 1971 Immigration Act, which allows deportation of "foreigners whose presence is consid-

ered not conducive to the public good on grounds of national security"

If anyone thinks that the right of *habeas corpus*, would be of any assistance, Lord Justice Mann and Mr Justice Tudor Evans summarily dismissed the appeal of one Pentonville Palestinian.

The Home Secretary's plea of "interests of national security",

THE SUN and the Tory right have launched an all out campaign to defend the democratic rights of workers in the factories!

But it's nothing to cheer about. The people who normally don't give a damn about conditions in our workplaces, are fighting for our "right" to fly the Union Jack as part of a racist campaign against Asian and Muslim workers who refuse to join in the jingoism at work.

The Sun's auxiliaries in this filthy attempt at provocation will be every fascist and racist longing to unleash pogroms on black workers at home and at work.

A sharp increase in racist attacks has already been reported. In Sheffield a minibus taking children from the Yemeni community to school was stoned. In Tower Hamlets, an Asian was stabbed in the

stomach and in the Midlands there has been a spate of attacks on mosques. Some employers, in their own interests are trying to limit the Sun-inspired racist agitation where there is a large Asian or Muslim workforce. Some Labour councils have expressed their opposition to provocative flags and slogans in their offices and depots.

One of those threatened with deportation Mr Abbas Cheblak, a Palestinian academic who has lived in Britain with his wife and children for sixteen years was refused the name of the terrorist

UNION JACK Tear it down!

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The silence of the TUC, the unions and the Labour leadership has been deafening. Trade union militants, socialists and anti-racists must take up the challenge.

Launch a fight in your workplace to tear down the Union Jack. It is the flag of the fascist, the imperialist general and the racist football thug.

Generations of workers in the past fought for the right to raise the red flag of international solidarity. That is the only flag we should fly at work.■

Now state attacks are already widening in scope. Not only "dangerous aliens" are threatened with the loss of their democratic rights.

In North London the Workers Revolutionary Party (News Line) were banned under the Public Order Act from marching under a banner calling for victory to Iraq.

Under the pretext that certain slogans are "likely to lead to a breach of the peace" the police will try to establish their power to censor placards, leaflets etc.

Whilst "truth is always the first casualty" in any war, the second is always sure to be democratic rights.■

THE GULF WAR



IF YOU ask the average rank and file Labour Party member about the party's fundamental aims, "peace" will always come high on the list of answers. Thousands of workers believe that Labour is a real alternative to British capitalism's historic "war party", the Tories.

It is fairly easy for Labour's leadership to perpetuate this myth during times of peace. But whenever there is a war the myth explodes faster than a cluster bomb. Labour's leaders scramble to prove themselves loyal to the bosses, to the bosses' war aim and to the bosses' killing machine. The Gulf war is yet another sickening example of this.

On the eve of war the Labour leadership, worried about divisions within the parliamentary party, shifted its emphasis. Instead of trying to out shout the Tories in the calls to punish Iraq they started urging more time for sanctions. The leadership backed a resolution of the Parliamentary Labour Party which called on:

"UN-authorized forces not to undertake military action until sanctions have been operated long enough to have had maximum impact."

Labour's Foreign Affairs spokesman, Gerald Kaufman, backed this "give sanctions a chance" line with an article in the *Guardian*. This argued that the 15 January UN deadline should not be regarded as authorisation for the start of fighting and that the allies should not allow themselves to be "hemmed in" to a war. Quite a few of Labour's "doves" welcomed this shift. *Tribune*, which had criticised the leadership for its belligerent stance, argued that the new position "deserves support". Many workers opposed to the war may have felt the same.

They would have been profoundly wrong. Kinnock and Kaufman were engaged in a cynical manoeuvre to minimise the divisions within the Labour Party. They were trying to ensure that as many Labour MPs as possible trooped into the same voting lobby as the open bosses' party—to say yes to war.

Sanctions

Two things illustrate the truth of this. First, despite arguing for a longer use of sanctions in the Commons debate on 15 January, the leadership refused to put a resolution to that effect. The resolution voted on was a technical one that the "House shall adjourn". In other words, the Labour leadership, up to its neck in secret deals with the Tories, had no position distinct from the Tories. Apart from the 55 MPs who voted against "adjournment" and those that abstained, Labour fully supported the Tory position.

Secondly, the content Kinnock gave to his call for the "patient and prolonged pursuit of sanctions", was unmistakably warlike. The Labour lefts and pacifists who call for sanctions against Iraq are calling for an economic war against Iraq. They are unable to answer the question—what if sanctions don't work? Their position is a hopeless muddle.

Not so the position of Kinnock. He was far clearer, than the left on the question of sanctions. He understands that they are a form of economic warfare that only has meaning as a prelude to a shooting war. In his speech to the Commons, greeted with cheers by the gang of Tory hecklers who normally specialise in disrupting his utterances, he said:

"Part of the reason for arguing for the longest possible use of sanc-

LABOUR

Once again Labour is urging British soldiers to kill for imperialism. Mark Harrison explains why it never does anything else.

Butchers' errand boys



"Don't stop the bombing"

tions, and it is in no sense a concession to Saddam Hussein or appeasement, is to try to ensure the killing rate is as low as possible."

Workers who believe Labour is the party of peace or that sanctions are an alternative to war should dwell on those words.

A lengthy period of sanctions does not exclude there being a "killing rate" for Neil Kinnock. For him the war is inevitable. But by starving Iraq—by depriving it, through sanctions, of spare parts and ammunition for its arsenal—sanctions can make it easier for the imperialist allies to win the war with few casualties. This was the speech of a warmonger, the leader of a warmongering party, a party that claims to represent the working class but acts decisively in the interests of the bosses.

Assault

Any doubt on this score was removed the next day when the fighting commenced. Kinnock and Kaufman had long said that as soon as fighting began, even if they disagreed with the timing of the war, they would honour their pledge to give the Labour Party's support to the brutal assault on Iraq. Kinnock was upfront about Labour's support for the imperialist troops. It "would not be given from a corner" he said, because:

"There can be absolutely no

THE GULF WAR

doubt about the legitimacy of military action against the Iraqi dictator. [The British troops] are doing their duty bravely; it is our duty to see we give them our backing firmly."

And against any dissenters in Labour's ranks he warned of the need for "the maximum possible unity". Already four front bench opponents of the line have been sacked or have resigned in the cause of "unity".

What is more the Labour leaders are now in the forefront of the campaign against any "pause" or ceasefire in the fighting. They want victory and nothing less. Unless Iraq surrenders unconditionally, argued Kaufman, "there is no point in having any kind of pause". Their war aims go well beyond Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. Parroting George Bush, Kinnock and Kaufman want the complete destruction of Iraq's military capability, an end to Saddam's ability to act as power in the Middle East and the punishment of the

Iraqi masses by exacting reparations after the war.

Kinnock is now to be found addressing bodies like the Royal United Services Institute; he is busy donating his blood to the war effort; he has been taken into the "confidence" of the ruling circles. But he is nowhere to be found inside the labour movement. He will not allow himself to be called to account for offering his support to the savage attack on Iraq. The CND demos he once patronised he now denounces. And the voices within his own party who oppose him are silenced either by being sacked or—as happened with Tony Benn—prevented by the two party leaderships and the Speaker, from putting their own amendments to resolutions in the House of Commons.

Collaboration

This sorry episode is not at all accidental or unique in Labour's history. Jeremy Corbyn, the left MP, complained that today it was like "being in a coalition Parliament". So it has been during every war waged by British imperialism. From 1914 through 1939, through Korea and Suez, through every war against liberation fighters in the "empire" including Ireland today, through the Malvinas war, Labour acted in collaboration with the Tories to en-

sure the smooth running of the slaughter machine. Even when Britain wasn't directly involved, as in Vietnam, Labour pledged its support to imperialism.

It is a valuable asset for the bosses to have a party that preaches the values of peace all the better to hoodwink workers into supporting war. For Labour, as the "party of peace", is ideally placed to explain to the working class that in each war imperialism is justified. The war is to defend the sovereignty of the "fatherland", to defend "democracy", to "oppose dictatorship", to combat "terrorism". In every case Labour supplies imperialism with political camouflage necessary for it to maintain working class support for its pursuit of plunder through violence.

In today's war Labour has ensured, through its grovelling unity with the Tories, that Britain's anti-war movement is one of the smallest in the world.

At the outset of the conflict there was considerable concern amongst British workers about what the US and the Tories were up to. There were justified suspicions that the unfolding conflict was about oil, not freedom. Instead of building on that concern Labour rushed in to assure workers that the issue was the liberation of Kuwait and democracy versus dictatorship. No matter that Kuwait was an undemocratic and artificial creation of British imperialism. No matter that the Saudis "we" were defending are governed by a brutal bunch of despots. Labour did the job of persuading workers that the war, when it came, would be just.

Labour will always follow this course. And, whatever the worthy intentions of its left wing, they cannot change it.

Their alternative to shooting was sanctions, their alternative to the US leading role was the UN—which authorised the fighting! Their alternative to defeating imperialism is a ceasefire that is based on Iraq giving in to imperialism's war aim.

Their alternative to Kinnock is a "soft option" for imperialism that can be squared with their genuine pacifist distaste for war. It can so easily be shot down by Kinnock and the Tories because it is not a consistent alternative, not an independent class alternative.

Alternative

Workers have been led into imperialist carnage by Labour too many times. For too long we have had to put up with a party that acts as a recruiting sergeant for imperialism. In building an anti-imperialist movement against the current slaughter we need to forge an independent working class and revolutionary alternative to Labour.

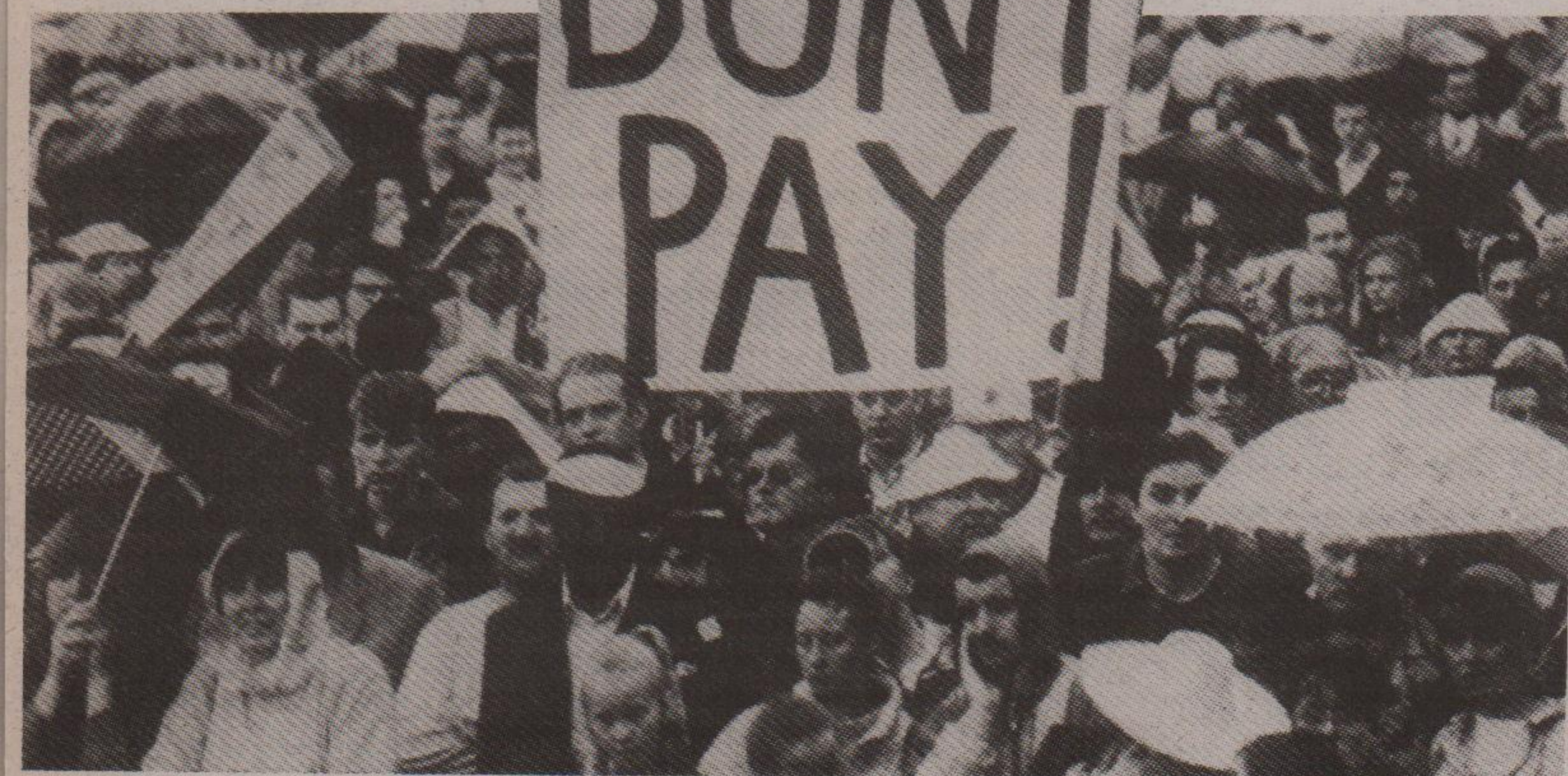
We can start this by taking the fight into the heart of the Labour Party itself. While the number of MPs voting against the war fell from 55 on 15 January to 34 on 21 January, this does not reflect the uncertainty that exists amongst rank and file members. A campaign against the imperialist attack on Iraq, one that denounces Kinnock for his betrayal of the working class and his support for the war and demands that Labour end this support, can turn that uncertainty into active opposition. It can win people, inside and outside the Labour Party to anti-imperialist action.

It can lay the basis for thousands of recruits to a revolutionary communist party—the only alternative to a Labour Party that relies on our class for its support, but obeys every order of our class enemy. ■

"Part of the reason for arguing for the longest possible use of sanctions, and it is in no sense a concession to Saddam Hussein or appeasement, is to try to ensure the killing rate is as low as possible." (Kinnock)

Workers who believe Labour is the party of peace or that sanctions are an alternative to war should dwell on those words.

No relief from Poll Tax misery



THE MILITANT dominated All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation has organised so little activity against the Poll Tax since its November AGM, we could be forgiven for thinking that John Major had thrown the tax into the dustbin of history. Unfortunately that is not the case.

Major and Michael Heseltine came to office promising to reform the Poll Tax. They needed to remove its potential as an electoral liability for a Tory government on the rocks.

Once Major was safely in Number Ten all talk of rapid reform was dropped. Now it is revealed that Heseltine has managed to get barely £300 million extra in transitional relief. The Treasury moved instead to deal with a much higher priority, paying for Major's bloody slaughter in the Gulf.

According to Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont, the Gulf war will mean yet more cuts in jobs and services at a time when local councils are already sinking into chaos.

A report by the Local Government Information Unit reveals that

it costs £130 million just to keep the Poll Tax register updated! Each change to the register costs, on average, £9.53.

The national average Poll Tax for the financial year 1991-92 has been estimated at £380 per head, and Treasury projections in November disclosed that individual bills are set to rise by at least £56.

The passing of the Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Bill which closes the loophole created by the victory of Lambeth Council in the Court of Appeal, will lead to more cuts and widespread charge-capping.

For all their rhetoric, the Tories are still committed to the fundamental principles of the Poll Tax; passing the cost of local authority service provision on to the working class. Labour councils' illusions in Michael Heseltine and "nice" John Major have been rudely shattered. Delegates from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities who met with Heseltine came away shocked at a demonstration of what they described as "Thatcherism in top gear" and called his plans for local government "the most centralist

prescription ever heard from a minister".

With non-payment of the Poll Tax still growing, the Tories and their cronies in the magistrates courts have moved onto the offensive. A High Court judgement in December ruled against the automatic "right" to a McKenzie's friend. In doing this they are preparing to turn the courts into "fine factories". This measure has dashed the main weapon of the All-Britain Federation's strategy—blocking the courts with cases—out of its hand.

On 15 January Pat Westmore became the second person to be jailed for non-payment of the Poll Tax, when Medina council took him to court. Trafalgar Square defendant, Michael Neal, was shortly afterwards given eighteen months for affray. Waiting in the wings is Newcastle-under-Lyme Labour Council which has issued 37 summonses for committal to prison.

Nevertheless, the chance to inflict a crushing defeat on the Tories still exists. The basis exists for a turn to militant direct action to smash the tax. When Lewisham Council issued 5,000 summonses against non-payers it got a 2,000 strong occupation of the local magistrates court for its pains.

Council workers in neighbouring Southwark have voted overwhelmingly to strike against cuts imposed as a result of the cash shortfall created by the introduction of the Poll Tax. In Lambeth non-payment stands at 80% and the council has not even begun enforcement!

But any exploitation of such possibilities demands a break with the passive "non-payment can win" strategy of the Federation and its misnamed *Militant* leadership. In the run-up to the setting of the new rate in March, anti-Poll Tax unions need to link up with council workers and service users and work for strikes, mass demonstrations and occupations against cuts and against the tax itself.

This will lay the basis for re-establishing the anti-Poll Tax campaign as a fighting force within the labour movement and pave the way for the generalised strike action necessary to finish off this hated tax once and for all.

As for the Federation leadership, at a time when the Tories are stepping up the class war at home and abroad, there can be no greater indictment of their bankruptcy than the fact that they have all but disappeared!■

THE LONGEST WAR

Britain's other war

"THE GOVERNMENT must promote its own cause and undermine that of the enemy by disseminating its view of the situation, and this involves a carefully planned and co-ordinated campaign of what for want of a better word must be called psychological operations".

So wrote General Frank Kitson, architect of British military strategy in Ireland in 1971. The disinformation and self-censorship which have become a prop of Britain's war drive in the Gulf are evidenced by countless instances in the war against the Irish resistance in the Six Counties. With one big difference.

Apart from the odd Ministerial slip of the tongue Britain has consistently denied that it is fighting a war against the IRA. Rather it is engaged in a "determined fight against terrorism", conducted by "fanatics and psychopaths". Strange then that so many of the repressive actions taken by the British state in the run up to the Gulf war bear all the hallmarks of the lessons learned in over twenty years of struggle to deny the right of self-determination to the peoples of Ireland.

In 1988 the British government introduced a media ban on Sinn Fein which effectively removed the right to free speech for an elected political party of the nationalist community. In his statement on the ban the then Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, defended this anti-democratic measure on the grounds that Sinn Fein used the media "to justify their criminal activities." By introducing such legislation, the British state was following in the footsteps of the 26 counties, where Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act has been in force every year since 1976.

Every TV picture, radio broadcast and newspaper article from the Gulf is also censored. Reports are based on doctored information provided by military officials. One of the BBC's war "experts" is Sir Michael Armitage, a former head of defence intelligence and "disinformation" specialist. All TV news pictures will have been vetted by the US, British and Saudi military, "to prevent politically damaging disclosures by soldiers and protect the public from the consequences of war". Any one with half a mind would be forgiven for thinking it remarkable that the media restrictions which apply to the Gulf war apply equally to the Six Counties, where, we are told, no war exists.

To avoid the creation of a "fifth column" in Britain, police and immigration officers have been rounding up Iraqi, Kurdish and Palestinian dissidents, while denying any move toward intern-

ment.

In 1971, with the IRA on the offensive and growing in numbers and capability, the British government seized upon internment as the most viable weapon in its armoury against the Irish resistance. In the three months from the reintroduction of internment 1,224 people were picked up, and over a four year period 2,158 internment orders were signed.

Many internees were arrested without any cause whatsoever and many were badly beaten. When the British state finally abandoned internment it did so in name only, using instead the Prevention of Terrorism Act as a means of surveillance on and detention of the Irish community and those sympathetic to the Republican cause.

Most recently, nine people were arrested outside the Kilburn National Dance Club in North London and slammed against a wall by armed police. Six were immediately released. When one of the remaining detainees, Martin Docherty, was released, the police admitted they had "insufficient evidence" to proceed. He was immediately re-arrested and "excluded" to Dublin under the PTA.

Winston Churchill once said that a nation at war must surround itself with a bodyguard of lies. This is true for the Irish war as for the slaughter in the Gulf.

The South Armagh Brigade of the IRA has recently issued a statement detailing the deaths of three British soldiers, and injuries to several others in an IRA operation at Tullyvallen. Local people reported a massive landmine explosion, and:

"... at least three stretchers being loaded into helicopters. A number of eye-witnesses also confirmed that two blanket-covered bodies were removed from the scene some time after the explosion, whilst a third soldier suffered extensive injuries."

British army reports claimed that no-one was seriously injured in the attack.

While the House of Commons daily berates Iraq's "invasion of its smaller neighbour" the British army maintains the artificial division of the Irish state at the point of a gun. As a Sinn Fein statement put it:

"The treatment of Allied prisoners by the Iraqis has been denounced by many of the same people who have inflicted torture, murder, show trials and decades of mistreatment of Irish political prisoners."

Whether in the Middle East or against the Irish resistance, Britain conducts its war behind a cover of lies. In the Six Counties, the big lie is that there is no war!■

ANTI★FASCISTS JAILED!

Tony David

NT 1338

4 years

Blundeston Prison

Lowestoft

Suffolk NR 5RG

Mark Malin

NT 1335

4 years

The Verne Prison

Portland

Dorset DT5 1EQ

David Phelan

NT 1337

3 years

Bisley Prison

Woking

Surrey GU24 9EX

★ PLEASE GIVE YOUR SUPPORT! ★
Letters if possible . . . but more for the long term, Christmas and Birthday cards.

BIRTHDAYS

Tony: 13 April

Mark: 7 December

David: 28 January





THE BOSSES' media is busy playing down the extent of opposition to this bloody war. But demonstrations of tens of thousands in London and around the country have shown that there is a militant minority willing to oppose the war on the streets, especially students and youth.

Local committees against the war are now drawing in new forces. In the colleges the first week of the war saw big meetings and numerous anti-war committees formed. Trades Councils and some workplaces have also set up committees, or brought together meetings of militants.

Two immediate questions face the anti-war movement. How do we organise this minority to mobilise the majority of workers against the war, and around what demands do we do it? Workers Power believes it is possible to build a principled and united movement against the war around three key slogans:

- Stop the war against Iraq
- Imperialist troops out of the Gulf now!
- Defend Arab and Muslim communities against internment, deportation and racist attack

The main campaign at the moment is the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. This national organisation has called the major demonstrations against the war. But the Committee has resisted any attempt to go beyond the calls to "Stop the war" and "Negotiate for Peace". This is because it has in its ranks people who support the blockade against Iraq and even the presence of troops in the Gulf, including leading members of CND.

As the war progresses, the inadequacy of this slogan becomes ever clearer. When the imperialist troops drive into Kuwait and then on to Iraq, the casualty list will grow day by day. What will these demands mean then? They will mean demanding that the Iraqi people negotiate under the guns of Britain and the USA. The Iraqis will be threatened with yet more slaughter and destruction unless they capitulate to the demands placed on them by the imperialist plunderers of the region's wealth and resources.

This is why it is vital that the anti-war movement takes a clear position against the presence of imperialist troops. CND and the pacifist leaders will oppose this. Obviously we do not aim to exclude them bureaucratically from the campaign; we leave such cowardly methods to them. But we

ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Where now?

firmly believe that any anti-war campaign that does not even fight for the withdrawal of the troops that are doing the killing is not worthy of the name. That is why we will fight for Troops Out, against the position of the present leadership of the Committee.

Where we win this it is virtually inevitable that the pacifist leaders will split rather than be associated with anti-imperialist demands. But to refuse to fight even for the basic anti-imperialist demand of "Troops out" in order to maintain "unity" would be a mistake.

Unfortunately the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) made exactly this mistake. It has tried to stop any fight taking place within the Committee. It has happily put the demand for Troops Out on its placards. But it has not dared to fight for the movement itself to adopt that position, because even to begin such a fight would mean challenging the undemocratic structures of the Committee, which the SWP has gone along with from the start.

Workers Power stands for the defence of Iraq against imperialist attack. If effective action against the war develops in the factories and colleges with protest strikes and occupations, the bosses and their lie machine, loyally backed by the Labour and trade union bureaucrats, will accuse the participants of undermining the war effort and helping Iraq.

Unless the most active sections of the working class can be convinced that an Iraqi victory is in their interests, many will be demobilised, unable to answer the arguments of the warmongers. That is why we have fought and will fight to win students, trade unions and Labour party branches to our position.

But a united front of workers' organisations against the war must be based on agreement to carry out common action. Unlike the demand for "Troops out", it is not necessary to commit the broad campaign to

THE GULF WAR

"Victory to Iraq" before it can carry out effective action against the imperialists' war aims.

The three demands that we have set out above are enough to unite in action with those forces who do not yet agree with our defence of Iraq. This will strengthen our chances both of building concrete anti-imperialist action, and of convincing others in the course of such action to adopt our consistent position for the defence of Iraq. In a healthy united front organisation these different positions would be openly argued. This is not the case within the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, both nationally and locally. Every attempt is made to exclude the anti-imperialist point of view, from speakers lists, from platforms, from the organisation of marches and demos.

As long as this is the case a role remains for campaigns such as Hands Off the Middle East (HOME) and Campaign Against War in the Gulf (CAWG). These committees were formed at the outset of the Gulf crisis as explicitly anti-imperialist bodies. Workers Power has worked within both. At the beginning of the crisis it was not pre-ordained that the labour movement organisations would swing behind the pacifist, cross-class Committee. We sought to unite HOME and CAWG and win trade union and Labour Party affiliations.

Unfortunately we did not succeed and it is necessary to take the fight for anti-imperialist workers' action into the pacifist Committee.

The role of the small anti-imperialist committees should now be to

take their positions into the pacifist committees and fight for these positions to be heard. CAWG has consistently failed to raise anti-imperialist slogans or to organise anti-imperialist contingents, demos and pickets. This needs to continue. Where action is vitally necessary and the pacifists refuse point-blank to organise it it is vital that local and national anti-imperialist committees are prepared to act independent of the pacifists.

Above all the anti-war committees should be turning their activists towards the working class, the class which has the power to bring the capitalist war machine to a grinding halt. Protest strikes have taken place in Turkey, Italy, Germany and North Africa. School boycotts and university occupations have been organised in Italy and Spain. If the British workers and youth are to play a

similar role the anti-war movement will have to challenge the pro-war leaders of the labour movement, if necessary appealing for action over their heads.

Regular bulletins and leaflets should be produced to counter the capitalist lies and propaganda. The aim should be to win trades councils, trade union branches and shop stewards' committees to the three demands, to form workplace anti-Gulf war committees, to build up support for meetings in work time to protest against the war, and then for strike action. The arguments must also be carried into the armed forces.

Asian and Arab workers and youth must be drawn into this struggle and we must fight to mobilise all workers in defence of these groups, subject as they are to growing harassment and racism. We must commit all workplaces and colleges which have Iraqi, Palestinian or any other group threatened with internment or deportation to strike action immediately they are threatened or arrested. We must prevent management and college authorities from giving names and addresses to the security services.

Unlike the anti-Vietnam War movement we do not have years to build up support. We have to use the coming weeks and months to turn the anger of a minority into the action of hundreds of thousands. ■

Move this resolution in your union, workplace, college, Labour Party branch!

1. This _____ believes that the war is a naked act of imperialist aggression, designed to ensure the continued exploitation of the people and resources of the Middle East. We call on members to actively oppose the US/allied war against Iraq.

2. This _____ resolves to support all actions and demonstrations called in protest against the war. We resolve to organise action to:
Stop the war against Iraq
Get the imperialist troops out of the Gulf now
Defend Arab and Muslim communities from internment, deportation and racist attack

3. This _____ further resolves to organise (a ballot for) protest strike action to further these aims, if possible in collaboration with other unions/branches, but not later than two weeks from now.

4. This _____ condemns the action of the Labour leadership which has supported Major and Bush to the hilt in inflicting mass slaughter on Iraqi civilians and conscript soldiers.

5. This _____, whilst giving no political support to the Saddam regime, is committed to fighting for:
Defend Iraq against imperialist attack!
Boycott all war work!
No sanctions, break the blockade! Send unconditional aid to Iraq!
Victory to Iraq against the allied armies!

6. On this basis we affiliate to the local anti-war committee.

ALL OVER the world workers and youth are protesting against the war. Written off by academics as "a declining class", the workers and youth have proved the cynics wrong. They have come onto the streets in their hundreds of thousands in every continent.

In Algeria, Libya, Yemen and Pakistan there have been literally millions on the streets. In Spain, Italy and Germany even the official trade unions have been forced to lead demonstrations and to call limited strikes. In Greece and Turkey, workers and students in struggle over pay and conditions have spontaneously raised the demand: "No War".

The reason for this is simple. Throughout the world workers will be made to pay for the war; in higher taxes, in greater repression, in the diverting of money and services from the needy to the war effort and with the blood of working class soldiers.

Unlike Britain, the vast majority of modern capitalist states still have conscript armies. All over the world, whether they have land forces in the Gulf or not, the recruiting sergeants of these armies are coming knocking at the doors of workers' estates, looking for young men and women to feed the military machine.

The response to the outbreak of war proves that the working class exists and that it is willing to fight against the horrific carnage that

is being unleashed.

But everywhere it is under reformist, pacifist and reactionary religious leadership.

The strength of the anti-war movement in southern Europe and in Germany compared to Britain and the USA is not simply due to the level of working class organisation and the extent of past defeats.

It also reflects splits within the ruling class of these countries and the fragility of the European imperialists' political solidarity with each other. In North Africa and Asia the demonstrations have often been led by governing parties or by reactionary religious leaders.

Though they are prepared to shout for peace today many of these leaders were only yesterday calling for maximum economic sanctions against Iraq. For them "No War" means, "let's return to sanctions and force Iraq to negotiate by starving its population".

The task of consistent anti-imperialists in every country is to turn these protests by workers and youth not just against the war but against the interests of their own ruling classes.

This means breaking with calls for sanctions and launching strike action to demand the withdrawal of troops, a boycott of war work and the breaking of the blockade against Iraq. It means refusing to make sacrifices for the war effort and defending those who refuse to lay down their lives for the profits of the big oil companies.

United States

AS THE UN deadline approached hundreds of demonstrations and protests were mounted across the USA. Student groups, peace activists, Vietnam veterans and trade unionists held meetings and teach-ins in an effort to mobilise an anti-war movement on the scale of the one built in the 1960s against the Vietnam War. Some of the strongest support for this movement came from the Bay Area on the West Coast.

On the night of 15 January a march was organised from the latino Mission District to the Chevron Oil HQ in downtown San Francisco. The whole of the city centre ground to a halt as thousands of protesters blocked major intersections, spray-painting hoardings and trolley buses with anti-war slogans. The crowds chanted as the deadline passed, building a huge bonfire in the street, while cops looked on helplessly.

Earlier that morning hundreds of activists had succeeded in blocking a key state government building and

the Bay Bridge, causing huge traffic jams. Once again the police were completely outnumbered and unprepared.

The news that fighting had commenced filtered through the city in late afternoon the following day. Soon activists from the peace camp outside City Hall and from neighbouring Berkeley and Oakland converged with San Francisco demonstrators on the city centre. A spontaneous demonstration of many thousands marched across the city once more, burning US flags as they went. Later that night, fresh attempts were made to block the Bay Bridge and two police cars were burnt out.

But by Thursday the police tactics changed. The Mayor, a Democrat who had declared the city a sanctuary for anti-war activists only days before, went on television bemoaning the fact that demonstrations were costing the city more than \$100,000 a day in police overtime. The anti-war movement was already proving more expensive than the 1989 earthquake!

When demonstrators got onto the Bay Bridge again they were attacked by baton wielding motor-cycle cops. Demonstrators in the city, who had been marching from dawn till dusk for two days, were ordered to clear the streets. Over 400 were arrested in one go.

The police ran out of special plastic handcuffs and ended up locking hundreds of people in a warehouse by the harbour. More than 1000 protesters were arrested on 17 January alone. And city supervisors changed the fine for walking on the Bay Bridge from \$35 to \$10,000!

On Saturday 19 January a huge demonstration of at least 100,000 proved to be the biggest in the USA, although thousands also marched in other cities across the country.

Spontaneous demonstrations had begun to die down in the following week as police repression increased but on Thursday 24 a torchlit demonstration attracted hundreds in Berkeley and on Friday a peace group circled the Chevron Building. On Saturday 26 more than 150,000 demonstrated in both San Francisco and Washington DC. Unlike the previous week's demonstration the Bay Area one had a contingent of over 6,000 trade unionists.

The Democrats, as always proved, in practice their complete loyalty to imperialism. Once they lost the vote for maintaining sanctions rather than beginning the shooting they had rallied round the President immediately war broke out. The only Congressman to unequivocally denounce the war was a Republican!

Workers action against the war in the USA is vital. The workers' movement must break its reliance on the Democrats and link the fight against the war to the struggle for an independent revolutionary workers party. ■

Spain

THE PAST two months in Spain has been a time of massive mobilisations of anti-war, pacifist and anti-militarist groups, from a general strike by 2.5 million students to plans for a massive demonstration at the US airbase at Torrejon.

The Spanish "socialist" government has sent a further three warships to the Gulf, supposedly to replace the ships already there. Plans for a much larger military intervention have recently been leaked to the press. Troops are being prepared, leave is suspended and extra training has begun.

As a result of this escalation two sailors have already refused to join the flotilla. The Ko-ordinadora de Colectivos Antimili (KoKo) have given full support to the "deserters" and their families, helping them to hide and offering legal services.

There are other "deserters"; those who refuse to return to military service after leave. There are even a number of desperate servicemen who have wounded themselves to avoid being sent.

The government swiftly sent warrants to the families of the two deserters followed by an offer of immunity from prosecution if they immediately join the flotilla. At the same time they are proceeding with the prosecution of six conscientious objectors, each of whom faces a maximum of two years in jail.

On the eve of war two markedly different demonstrations took place. On Sunday 13 January 50,000 marched through Madrid's deserted financial district in a carnival-type pacifist demonstration.

On Tuesday 15 January 2.5 million students answered the call for a general strike. The strike effectively closed the vast majority of schools and colleges. Overall 300,000 marched in the streets of the major cities. This time 70,000 working class youth took to the streets of Madrid. During and after the march numerous windows of big commercial companies were smashed. As the demo wound through the working class areas of southern Madrid it met with sympathy and shouts of support from the balconies of the workers' tenements.



Protesters demonstrating in San Francisco as the war began

Photo: RTT

Protests sweep the world

On the same day workers from the UGT (Spanish TUC) and CCOO (Workers' Committees) were called on to observe a minute's silence. But there was no official workers movement representation on the

student demo.

But on the day after the war broke out an estimated two million workers took action such as 15 minute strikes and factory meetings against the war. ■

Germany

OPPOSITION TO the war is growing in the newly united Germany.

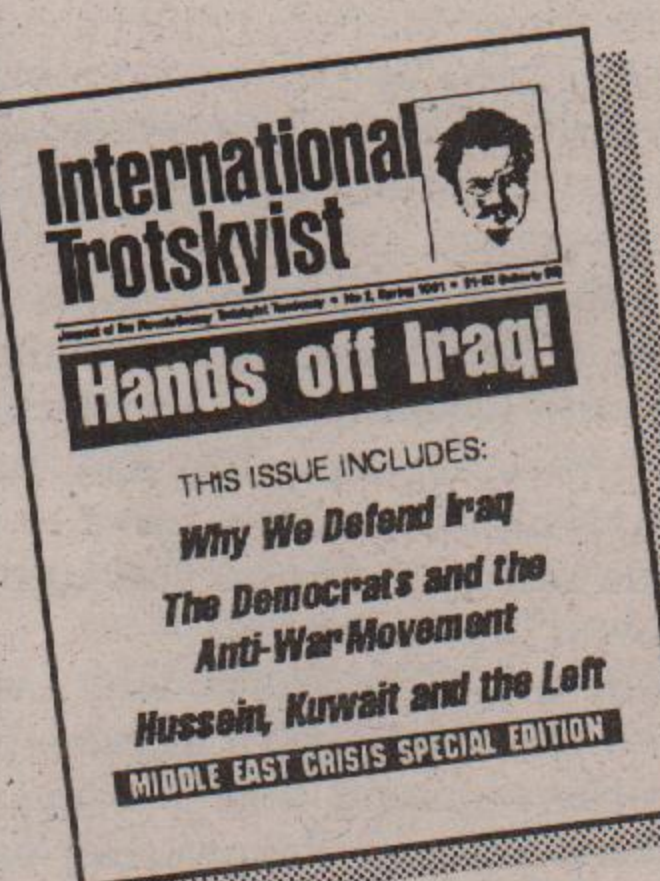
A series of demonstrations took place around the country in December, mainly under the influence of the old pacifist movement, the Greens and the semi-anarchist Autonomen. As the United Nations deadline approached the numbers began to swell, with an enormous demonstration of 100,000 people marching through Berlin on 12 January. Workers and leftists from both parts of the city joined to march against the war under the slogans, "No War in the Gulf" and "No Blood for Oil".

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), formerly the ruling party of East Germany, participated in the Berlin demonstration, marching

with their own block. The other major party with support in the workers' movement, the SPD, has also had involvement from its rank and file members. But the SPD leadership are beginning to get nervous at the tone adopted by the demonstrators. They have criticized the movement for "anti-Americanism" and encouraged protesters to carry US and Israeli flags!

Most encouraging of all, on the day war broke out the German Trade Union Federation called a strike in protest. Unfortunately it was only for only 15 minutes. Although this is only a small start it is light years ahead of the British TUC and should be used as the start of a campaign of mass strike action against the war. ■

THE GULF WAR



OUT NOW!

Issue two of *International Trotskyist*, publication of the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA)

Articles include:

- The Left, the Democrats and the Anti-War Movement
- GI resistance - at home or in the Gulf?
- The Invasion of Kuwait and the US Left

Available from Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX
Price £2 inc p&p

"How else can we free Kuwait?"

MARLIN FITZWATER, Bush's spokesman, told the world that, with the attack on Baghdad, "the liberation of Kuwait has begun". This is the democratic gloss the imperialists are using to cover up their real war aims.

Major and Hurd tell us that when Saddam has been beaten, the "rightful rulers" of Kuwait will be restored to power. Every soldier being asked to die to "liberate" Kuwait and every worker being asked to support them has a right to know who these "rightful rulers" are. The Emir of Kuwait, a member of the al-Sabah family, is the answer.

The Emir and his family are feudal despots. Under their rule political parties were banned and their members imprisoned. Out of a population of two million, only 60,000 people were allowed to vote. At the last elections this amounted to 3% of the male population. Women had no vote at all.

The really die-hard imperialist supporter will doubtless cite the very fact that there were elections as evidence of why Kuwait is worth being killed or maimed for. Well, the reason elections amongst a handful of voters were allowed in the years since independence from Britain is that the al-Sabah family had a guaranteed majority. These elections were no more democratic than the ones Saddam Hussein stages for his national assembly.

In 1985 opposition MPs were elected. They tried to question a government minister and to investigate a financial scandal. The parliament was dissolved by the Emir in 1986 in response to this. From then on the Emir ruled by decree.

For the mass of the Kuwaiti population there were never even sham democratic rights. Foreign workers had absolutely no rights at all, social or political. Since 80% of the

working class were foreign, this was a system blatantly rigged in favour of the rich, or in the case of the 1000-strong al-Sabah family, the super-rich.

The USA, Britain and France are intervening to protect this ruling millionaire clique because it is through them that they have been able to exercise their own rule since Kuwait was carved out of the desert after World War One.

After that war Britain and France dominated the region to secure trade routes and the military defence of their eastern colonies. The discovery of oil and the dominance of the USA after 1945 only intensified imperialism's interest in the region. The "independence" of Kuwait, granted in 1961, was a farce. The al-Sabahs continued to rule as imperialism's puppets, and well paid puppets at that.

This explains why the imperialist powers never raised a murmur of protest against the undemocratic practices of the Emir or the complete lack of rights granted to the 300,000 Palestinian workers and 500,000 Asians in Kuwait.

The deep sympathy expressed by Bush and Major for the dispossessed former ruling elite contrasts with the utter lack of support that imperialism has shown for the thousands of foreign workers now languishing in camps on the Jordanian/Iraqi border. As always, the immigrant workers are the heaviest losers.

Despite all this, say the imperialists, Kuwait is the poor little victim of aggression. The Kuwaiti nation has been "raped", as Bush puts it, and its right to self-determination needs to be re-established. While the mass of people who live and work in Kuwait should have the right to determine their own future, Kuwait itself is not in any meaningful sense a nation.

The state itself was created by the British High Commissioner in Iraq in 1922 with a stroke of the pen. It did not exist as a separate territory before then. Kuwait has no special customs, culture or traditions of its own that are associated with nations, and of course there was no significant Kuwaiti working class. The majority of the Kuwaiti population were classified as aliens, foreign workers who were denied rights of citizenship.

The idea that imperialism is bombing hell out of Iraq in order to defend the Kuwaiti nation is a smokescreen thrown up like all the other lies to prevent us from seeing what the imperialists real aims and interests are.

Workers Power opposed Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. We do not now call for Iraq to get out as this would lead to an immediate US and British occupation. It would strengthen imperialist control of the area even further. It would enable them to secure their total control of the oil supplies on behalf of Texaco, Exxon and Shell, and to put their reliable dictators back on the throne.

The battle that began on 16 January was not "the liberation of Kuwait" but the reconstruction of an imperialist enclave. ■

"HOW CAN you support a dictator?" That is the first response of many anti-war activists to Workers Power's defence of Iraq against imperialist attack.

We argue that workers should support Iraq in this war because of the fundamental economic and class issues at stake.

The USA and Britain are imperialist countries. This means they have historically exploited areas like the Middle East to accumulate vast profits. Before the Second World War they defended this exploitation with a nakedly colonial system: Iraq was "mandated" (given) to Britain by the League of Nations, the predecessor of the modern UN.

After the Second World War, as the USA became the unchallenged imperialist superpower, the colonial system was transformed into a system of semi-colonies. These were countries independent in name only. They were economically dependent on imperialism and politically subordinate to it. The superprofits continued to flow into imperialist bank accounts and the rounded development of economies like Iraq was prevented.

This system of imperialist exploitation prevents the ruling class of semi-colonial countries like Iraq

from breaking into the "big league" of imperialist powers, no matter how self-important their rulers are.

Despite being the willing allies of imperialist exploitation the semi-colonial bourgeoisie is occasionally compelled by the pressure of class forces to challenge the imperialists: not over their right to exploit but over the terms of exploitation. That is what Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was about: a challenge to the established pecking order in the Middle East, an insistence on Iraq's right to boost the price of oil to bolster its already war-torn economy.

Despite this reactionary aim the invasion of Kuwait has placed Saddam in military conflict with the imperialist armies. It is not a conflict Marxists would have chosen. We did not call for Saddam to invade Kuwait. We do not think the invasion was in any way "anti-imperialist". But we have to decide our attitude to the conflict now it has begun.

In the First World War Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued that workers should take no side between Britain, France, Germany etc. Lenin's position was summed up in the phrase: defeat on both sides.

This means that a defeat for your own country, because the

workers carry on the class struggle, is better than victory at the price of class peace.

But this revolutionary defeatist position was never applied by Marxists to wars between colonial countries and their imperialist oppressors.

Marx demanded that the working class supported the Irish struggle for independence against

Tom King, egged on by Neil Kinnock, has made clear that the official war aims of the allies now include the invasion of Iraq and destruction of Saddam Hussein's military power.

What they mean is the destruction of Saddam's regime. Nobody should be surprised by this extension of imperialism's goals. It is not really a change at all. The idea that one of the mightiest war machines ever seen, costing billions of pounds, has been assembled simply to restore the Emir of Kuwait was always laughable.

George Bush and his allies moved into action in order to establish a permanent military presence in the oil rich and strategically vital Gulf region. They want to guarantee imperialist domination of the area, domination disrupted since the revolution in Iran in 1979.

A few years ago they thought Saddam Hussein was one of their friends and they helped arm him to the teeth. Now he has fallen out of favour and they are determined

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Britain. Marx and Engels applied this principle even to wars led by reactionary dictators but which had a historically progressive aim. They supported Germany in wars against Austria (1866) and France (1870) who were trying to strangle the emerging German bourgeois nation. Of the war against France Engels wrote:

"Bismarck [the German dicta-

tor] at present is doing a bit of our own work in his own way and without meaning to, but all the same he is doing it." (Engels, *Letter to Marx*, 15 August 1870)

In the twentieth century both Lenin and Trotsky applied the same principle.

In Turkey in the early 1920s, Kemal Ataturk found himself at the head of a national revolution,

head on a plate.
 sm is a world system of unri-
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 the world's population to starva-
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 opped so that a handful of multi-
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 se lies are being peddled today.
 supposedly a bastion of "free-
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 nly vow to protect. The war is a
 a fight democracy against dicta-

Brenner uncovers the truth be-
 lies.

ts on THE GULF WAR

"Israel is an innocent bystander"

THE SCUD missile attacks on Tel Aviv met with jubilation from Palestinians and were cheered throughout the Arab world. Why? Israel has earned the hatred and contempt of the Arab masses. Since its foundation in 1948 it has conducted systematic terror against the Palestinian inhabitants of the region.

When British rule ended in May 1948, Arabs constituted the majority of the population of Palestine. The Zionists (those Jews supporting the establishment of a specifically Jewish state in Palestine) conducted armed attacks on Arab areas such as Jaffa. Over 250 Arab civilians were slaughtered in cold blood at Deir Yassin. News of the atrocities was deliberately broadcast to Arab areas by the Zionists, creating widespread terror and a mass flight away from the conquering army.

By the end of what the Zionists call "The War of Independence" and the Palestinians call the *Nakba* (the catastrophe) 750,000 Palestinians had been driven from their land and were condemned to live in the squalor of refugee camps in neighbouring Arab states.

In 1948 alone, one million acres of land held by Arabs was confiscated. Peasant farmers whose families had tilled the soil for generations were obliged, under Israeli law, to prove that they had not left their farms during the

period of the most fierce fighting! If they couldn't prove it, they lost their land.

Today Israel practices thoroughgoing discrimination against Arabs in employment. They are banned from certain work and are concentrated in the worst jobs in construction and services. Their standard of living is, on average, 40% lower than that of Jewish workers. In housing discrimination is no less intense. The towns of Karmel and Upper Nazareth in the Galilee are examples of this. They were built by Arabs on Arab land. No Arab may live there.

In 1967 and 1973 Israel occupied even more territory. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under the direct rule of the Israeli government, but are not part of Israel. The Arab majority has no democratic rights and is today living under a 24 hour curfew, just another of the vicious repressive measures that have been meted out against any sign of Palestinian resistance.

Few will forget the horrors of Israel's repeated acts of aggression against the Lebanese people. The hypocritical outrage expressed by the British and US governments at the "indiscriminate bombing" carried out by Iraq was totally absent when the Israeli airforce killed or maimed nearly 50,000 civilians in Beirut in 1982. Most appalling of all were the events at

Sabra and Shatila. Right wing Christian extremists were sent into two Palestinian refugee camps, having been allowed to pass, fully armed, by the Israeli army. The Israeli army lit the area with flares allowing the slaughter of over 2,000 inhabitants in one night.

That is why Arabs despise the Zionist state. It is why the Palestinians now hope that Saddam will crush Israel.

Many will agree that the history of Israel is one of brutal repression and racism. But many are confused by the insistence of millions of Arab workers and peasants that the Israeli state has no right to exist at all. Is this just another form of racism, denying to Israeli Jews the very right to self-determination that the Palestinians are fighting for?

Reformed

To all who believe that Israel should simply be reformed and who support its right to exist and to defend itself, we pose a simple question: could there ever be a specifically Jewish state in Palestine that did not discriminate against the Palestinians?

One answer often put forward is simply to grant more democratic rights to the Palestinians. But the discrimination that presently exists is fundamental to Israel's whole identity and survival as a state. One example of this is the "Law of Return".

This notorious racist law allows any Jew, wherever they come from, to become an Israeli citizen the minute they set foot on Israeli soil. This contrasts dramatically with Israel's refusal to grant rights of return to the families of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians languishing in refugee camps. The oft repeated claim that "Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East" rings hollow when the absence of such rights for Arabs in the occupied territories is borne in mind.

The point is that, to be a specifically Jewish state, Israel must preserve a majority of Jews over Arabs as full voting citizens. That is why millions are physically and politically excluded from their rights.

That is why the Zionists are so keen to set up "settlements" in the West Bank to increase the level of the Jewish population. And that is why even mainstream Israeli politicians are openly considering the mass expulsion, or "transfer" of Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories.

The extension of full democratic rights to the Palestinians, including the right of return, would undermine the whole Zionist project. That is why their state will not allow this for as long as it is in existence.

One other proposal is the so-called "two-state" solution. But the creation of a weak, disarmed and economically dependent Arab state in the least fertile parts of Palestine would be no answer. Who would determine the borders? Would Arabs be forced to live there? What about the rights of Palestinians still trapped within Israel? The two-state solution is unable to answer these questions.

That is why we join with millions of Arabs and anti-imperialists around the globe in saying that Israel has no right to exist. Socialists take no pleasure in the deaths of civilians whether in Beirut, Gaza or Tel Aviv. Still less do we harbour illusions that Saddam Hussein has the interests of the Palestinians at heart.

But the fundamentally racist character of the Zionist state and its role as a watchdog for US imperialism mean that we oppose all defence of Israel. In times of war we stand with the exploited and backward semi-colonial Arab states against them.

Any fight for equal rights, regardless of religion, race or nationality, requires the destruction of the Zionist state. Palestinian workers and peasants must continue their heroic battle against that state, alongside Iraqi forces but completely independent of political control from Baghdad.

A socialist republic of Palestine cannot be brought about by missiles from afar. It can only come via workers' revolution, within and outside the Israeli state, and the fight for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.■



ppport a dictator?"

and in a bitter proxy conflict with British imperialism. Britain was using Greece to make war against Turkey. Despite the fact that Ataturk had driven the communists underground and had seventeen of their leaders drowned, despite the fact that Ataturk had committed genocide against the Armenian people, the healthy Soviet state supported and gave practi-

cal aid to Turkey in its struggle against the British and their Greek pawns.

When Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935 the British Independent Labour Party, which then considered itself "revolutionary", refused to take sides. Its leaders, including James Maxton, declared that the war was "a conflict between two dictatorships" and

therefore the workers could not call for a victory for Ethiopia.

Trotsky was quick to reply: "Of course we are for the defeat of Italy and the victory of Ethiopia... However we want to stress the point that this fight is not directed against fascism, but against imperialism. When war is involved, for us it is not a question of who is "better", the Negus [the ruler of

Ethiopia] or Mussolini: rather it is the question of the relationship of classes and the fight of an underdeveloped nation for independence against imperialism." (Trotsky *The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict* 1935)

We do not make the overthrow of such leaders a condition of our full support for the war against imperialism. We unite in action with such leaders and the masses behind them for as long as they actually fight imperialism, but with our own slogans and separate organisations.

Trotsky took exactly the same position in relation to the war between Chiang Kai-shek's forces and Japan in the 1920s and 30s. He wrote:

"The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of her economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression, of the class struggle in China.

"But can Chiang Kai-shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence

among the proletariat and the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of struggle. We must win influence in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies and the internal betrayal. At a certain point which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war, like war generally, is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle... In the national war against foreign imperialism the working class, while remaining in the front lines of the military struggle, must prepare the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie."

Today this approach guides our attitude to Saddam and Iraq. Our support for Iraq against the USA in no way involves political support or the "suspension" of the class struggle. The purpose of our united action with Saddam is to put the Iraqi workers in a better position to overthrow him; to allow the Iraqi class struggle to continue free of interference from the US and British military, the CIA and the governments of the imperialist powers.■

USSR

Slamming the brakes on glasnost

A NEW order, issued by Defence Minister Boris Pugo, allows armoured troop carriers and army units to patrol the streets of Soviet cities, including Leningrad, to "assist" the regular police in the "fight against organised crime". In reality the order is just one more step in the creeping *coup d'état* that has been underway since the Congress of Peoples Deputies in mid-November when Gorbachev was given the power to rule by decree.

At this Congress Gorbachev effected a break with the bloc of his supporters who had been the initiators and defenders of perestroika, Yakovlev, Primakov, Medvedev and even the cautious Ryzhkov. He moved to ally himself with the army chiefs, the Interior Ministry and the KGB. Soon Gorbachev's closest allies were Defence Minister Yazov, Interior Minister Pugo and the KGB Chairman, Kryuchkov.

Kryuchkov really set the ball rolling with his television interview in which he spoke of a "wave of anti-communism" engulfing the country. He concluded ominously:

"Today the situation is formulated like this: should our great power exist or should it not? KGB officers have made their choice!"

Gorbachev's appointment of Yanayev as vice-president indicated that he had also decided to bury the hatchet with the CPSU party bureaucracy. This army of officials, hundreds of thousands strong, have watched in mounting alarm as workers, intellectuals and collective farmers deserted the party *en masse*. At the same time in the republics they have either been ousted from office or forced to share power.

The conservative camp also has solid support with the stratum of industrial enterprise managers. Meeting in an All-Union Congress of Enterprise leaders they expressed their alarm at the "inter-ethnic conflict, total deficit of goods, inflation, rampant crime, economic racketeering and political extremism". They revealed that enterprises will enter 1991 with 60% of their 1990 contracts unfulfilled, that industrial production could be nearly halved and that "the entire structure of the national economy could collapse."

The conclusion was a call for "an end to improvisation in the economy" and a return to "order and discipline". This should be imposed by president's decree. The measures they pressed for included a "moratorium on the economic sovereignty of republics and regions" and a "moratorium on strikes in all sectors of the national economy".

The economic crisis can hardly be denied by any faction within the bureaucracy. Official figures (January) show a drop of gross domestic product by 2%, and of industrial

The forces of bureaucratic reaction are gaining ground in the USSR. Determined not to see the Soviet Union take the road of Eastern Europe or disintegrate under the pressure of nationalist and ethnic unrest, the KGB, sections of the military and the party and state apparatus are putting in place the mechanisms for a vicious crackdown. Dave Evans explains how and why.

production by 4%. The *Economist* thinks the drop in the GDP was probably 5% for 1991 and will be 10% in 1992.

Gorbachev and the bureaucratic conservatives put the principal blame for this crisis onto the troublesome republics, as well as Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation. They also blame the so-called mafia, the operators of the illegal and semi-legal black economy. That is why republics and the mafia have become the public targets of the regime. For the out and out "conservatives" who wish to return to full scale centralised planning these attacks are a stalking horse for the market and *perestroika* altogether.

But this is not true of Gorbachev himself, nor many other "disciplinarians" around him. They still want marketisation but draw the conclusion that the USSR has had

too much democracy. "We have had a lot of problems with *glasnost* and democracy", Gorbachev told a meeting of cultural figures:

"We have pressed the 'on' button but have forgotten about safety mechanism. We have started the engine but have not adjusted the brakes."

This is why he is turning back for support to the old conservative faction of the bureaucracy. But the more the conservatives drape Stalin's great coat over Gorbachev the more shrunken and pathetic a figure he cuts. Armed with the greatest panoply of powers a Soviet leader has ever been granted, in reality they take effect only if Kryuchkov, Yazov and Pugo will enforce them.

Gorbachev sees his central mission as preserving the Union of which he is the president. His new Federation Treaty tries to force the recalcitrant republics back into recognising the authority of the All Union government in military, economic and foreign trade matters. Clearly this is unacceptable to those republics like the Baltics and Georgia that are seeking to secede. It is also unacceptable to those seeking greater autonomy.

The dilemma for Gorbachev is that his policy of *glasnost* has given those opposed to any sort of restoration of bureaucratic order the impetus to resist his new policies. The repression in the Baltics has stirred all the forces opposed to the re-imposition of bureaucratic dictatorship. As many as 300,000 people marched in Moscow under the slogans "No dictatorship", "Dictatorship will not pass", "Hands off Lithuania". At the same time there are signs of disquiet in the Soviet Armed Forces. A Soviet military unit in Vitebsk, Belorussia refused to go to Riga.

There are also stirrings from the independent labour movement. Work collectives in the Kuzbass called for a general political strike starting on 18 January, calling for the immediate resignation of the All-Union government, the resignation of the president and the dissolution of the Congress of Peoples Deputies. The Donbass and the Kuzbass are due to strike on economic demands, increased wages, coal prices and subsidies for development from 1 February if their demands are not met.

But despite the impending danger, and despite the mass support the forces ranged against the threat of a bureaucratic clamp down can mobilise, there is an acute crisis of direction in the ranks of the opposition—a crisis of leadership. The nationalists of the Popular Fronts, the union leaderships of the Miners' Federation and the Confederation of Labour and the "Democrats" in Moscow, Leningrad and the Russian Federation have

all been embroiled in the programme of marketisation, privatisation and the restoration of capitalism. The source of these ideas within the Soviet Union is the demoralised bureaucracy itself. For five years Gorbachev and his advisers pumped out the message that market relations are normal, and that the means of production must be broken up and large sections privatised.

Now Gorbachev has dismissed his advisers and is beginning to talk once more, demagogically, of socialism. But in reality most of



the pro-dictatorship forces remain marketeers, including even Petrushenko, Makashov and Alknsis, the "black colonels" at the head of Soyuz. The coalition behind Gorbachev seeking a crackdown is heterogeneous. But it agrees that the bureaucratic police dictatorship must be restored, the Union preserved against the wishes of the Soviet peoples if necessary and that a poisonous Russian chauvinism needs to be used to mobilise mass acquiescence.

Faced with this threat the "democratic forces" are disarmed. The nationalists themselves play into the conservatives' hands with their anti-working class marketising decrees, price increases, attempts to close factories and above all by their own undemocratic measures against national minorities.

Parallel to this misleadership is the willing participation of the democratic forces in the Russian Federation in the sham parliaments, the union, regional and city Soviets. It was these bodies that experimented with marketising measures that made life worse for the population and embroiled them with the black marketeers and the criminal underworld.

The trade unions, as the October congress of the one million strong miners' union showed, are in deep confusion. The miners' union is pledged to the transition

to a market economy. It has set itself the goal of bringing down the government yet it rejects in principle identification with any party.

So far its attempts at political strikes have proved failures. The working class in general and the miners in particular have not been won to political goals for transforming the USSR. They do not trust the marketising democrats. They fear and loath the official party and the restorationists of bureaucratic rule.

Time is running out for the independent labour movement. Unless it re-orientates itself politically towards the consistent class interests and historic goals of the proletariat it will become or remain a plaything in the hands of one set or reactionaries or another.

For the oppressed nationalities, for the proletariat of the whole USSR, for the intelligentsia who fear the return of the unbridled savagery of the KGB there is only one answer.

That is contained in the living programme of Trotskyism. In the fight to block the bureaucratic reaction and hurl it back in disorder, in the fight to open up a political revolution that can sweep the *nomenklatura* from power, in the fight to prevent the agonies of capitalist restoration that the workers of Eastern Europe are now facing—a new party must be formed.

This party must be modelled on the genuine Bolshevism of 1903 to 1923, rooted amongst rank and file workers, with a lively internal democracy and a high political level of cadre.

It must be a disciplined combat party able to make a revolution at the head of the millions of workers.

This victorious revolution must pledge itself to free the USSR's nationalities to separate if they wish but also to offer voluntary federation and co-operation in a common democratic plan of production that can raise the populations' material and cultural levels.

Here and now faced with an impending economic catastrophe and bureaucratic counter-revolution all socialists and worker militants must come together to thrash out an action programme. Its immediate demands must be:

- Stop the bureaucratic counter-revolution—down with the Bonapartist presidency and its organs of repression. KGB and all interior ministry troops out of the Baltics and all the republics seeking separation or autonomy.

- Arm the workers and fraternise with the soldiers. For the election of all officers by the rank and file soldiers.

- Elect genuine soviets of recallable delegates in the factories and barracks as organs of struggle against bureaucratic counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism.

- Smash the sabotage of the bureaucrats, the speculators and the "mafia" with workers' control of production and distribution.

- Fight for power—dissolve the "ruling party" of the *nomenklatura* and its fake parliaments. For all power to a nationwide congress of genuine soviets.

- Preserve the property of the workers and peasants from private capitalists and imperialist monopolies. For social ownership and a democratic workers' plan drawn up by a congress of workers' delegates.

- For a restoration of revolutionary internationalism embodied in a new Leninist-Trotskyist party and International. Immediate break with the imperialists. Aid to the Iraqi people and all peoples struggling against imperialism.



Boris Pugo Gorbachev's new Interior Minister

Hands off Lithuania!

The bloody assault on the TV station in Vilnius which left fourteen dead indicates that a decisive shift has taken place within the Soviet bureaucracy. Taking advantage of the diversion of world attention by the impending imperialist holocaust in the Middle East and of the USA's continued need for the USSR's support in the Security Council, the military and the KGB are set on coercing the nationalities that have refused to accept Gorbachev's new centralist federation treaty.

But the actions of the paratroopers in Vilnius and Riga foreshadow even more far reaching developments. The inner Bonapartist clique around Gorbachev—Yazov the Defence Minister, Pugo the Minister of the Interior and Kryuchkov the KGB chief—finds the limited democratic rights known as *glasnost* increasingly intolerable.

Clampdown

The military and KGB clampdown on the Baltic Republics is not only a testbed for the suppression of the movements for national rights and independence throughout the USSR; it is preparing the way for the destruction of the freedom of speech, assembly and organisation throughout the USSR. In particular it threatens the newly emerging labour movement with the loss of the right to strike, to organise unions and political parties free of the bureaucratic dictatorship.

Such a presidential *coup d'état* was prepared by the majority of the Supreme Soviet giving full powers to Gorbachev in December. Most of the so-called radicals and reformers were involved in this spineless capitulation. The pretext for these radicals was that the impending economic catastrophe required the forcing through of "economic reform" (i.e. further and indeed decisive restorationist measures).

Consequences

Gorbachev, they believed, would use his dictatorial powers for this. He was the last best hope for them. If he were to fall, then the reformers fear that Kryuchkov, Pugo and Yazov could carry through a bloody restoration of unbridled party dictatorship. This would have as one of its first consequences the halting and even the reversal of "economic reform". It could even lead to a new outbreak of cold war with imperialism.

Thus the "radical" deputies of the impotent parliaments, the "governments" without any state forces, voted to surrender their only possession, their sham sovereignty. The pitiful size of the forces, a thousand or so in Moscow, that heeded their call to demonstrate against the bloodshed in Lithuania demonstrates the bankruptcy of these figures.

Intervention

Despite the statements by the KGB and army chiefs that their intervention is aimed at preventing the restoration of "the bourgeois system", there is not the slightest evidence that the Sajudis government planned an armed insurrection against the Soviet forces, or contemplated pogroms or oppression against the Russian and Polish minorities.

The first victims of Gorbachev's crackdown were nationalist protesters in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius. Workers should support Lithuania's right to independence.



A protester confronts a Soviet tank in Vilnius

Certainly Landsbergis and Prunskiene are restorationists. But the wish is far from being the deed as developments throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR itself, have demonstrated.

They possess neither the state forces nor the economic wherewithal to implement capitalism in the short term. In addition it should be recognised that their stated programmes are not in fundamental contradiction to those that have been formulated in the Kremlin. In fact, like all the USSR governments—local, regional, republican and all-union—the Lithuanian administration proved unable to carry through a fundamental price reform for fear of a mass explosion.

Draconian

Just such an explosion threatened to engulf the Sajudis. Landsbergis, fearing the overnight dissipation of the nationalists' mass base, moved rapidly to dump the luckless Prunskiene. Indeed it was probably the nationalists' growing isolation from their mass base that suggested to the hardliners that this was the moment to strike. It suggested that Lithuania would be the best testing ground for Gorbachev's draconian presidential powers.

This legal *coup d'état* is not being undertaken in a defence of the planned economy and the dictatorship of the proletariat against threatened restoration any more than was Jaruzelski's 1981 crushing of Solidarnosc in Poland or Li Peng's bloody carnage in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Bureaucratic conservative counter-revolution must be fought tooth and nail!

Whilst it may temporarily slow or modify the moves to the market,

it will wreak an even greater damage on the proletariat, the only living force capable of defending the workers' state.

It would destroy the class conscious proletariat's remaining attachment to the workers' state itself. It would once more, and this time probably finally, identify it with a bloody despotism of the privileged generals and bureaucrats.

Brutality

To destroy the organisations and militancy of the proletariat and nationalities of the whole USSR, built up over the last five years, would entail brutality and carnage on an unbelievable scale. In conditions of economic collapse this would do more than any other single crime of Stalinism, even the horrors of the thirties, to bring about the destruction of the remaining gains of October 1917.

In Lithuania, and increasingly in the other Soviet Republics, a majority of the working class identifies its primary interests as resting with the achievement of

national independence. For the Kremlin to brutally suppress these legitimate national demands will consolidate the alliance of the Lithuanian workers with those restorationists who they see primarily as fighters for independence. The only way to break the working class from this alliance is to grant Lithuania full national independence.

The havoc wrought to the proletariat's class consciousness by over sixty years of Stalinist dictatorship, economic bungling and corruption, has led to widespread confusion on the question of the defence of planning. Only freedom and democracy for the workers, the collective farmers and the nationalities, can allow the toilers to overcome this and learn in struggle the need to defend the planned and nationalised property.

Vanguard

Only workers' democracy can permit the proletarian political vanguard to re-form around a Trotskyist party, committed to defence of the October gains and the total destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship, i.e. to a thoroughgoing political revolution.

That is why Trotskyists and all working class fighters must defend the Lithuanian people's right to self-determination and indeed that of all the USSR's nations, up to and including separate statehood if they so desire it.

The defence of the planned property relations and the workers' state is not identical with the continued unity of the USSR. Indeed the defence of planned property relations is most certainly incompatible with the continued existence of a forcible union of peoples, a Russian "empire".

Lenin and Trotsky were not the founders or defenders of this bureaucratic parody of a "free federation of peoples". Its true father was Stalin. The bloody massacres under Gorbachev, in Georgia, Azerbaijan and now Lithuania, his deceitful and bullying attempt to force them to stay within a centralised Federation, have fatally weakened the potential for co-operation and fraternity. This can only be restored if the proletariat of the USSR, and particularly the Russian workers, take up the battle for the right to free and unhampered secession now.

General strike

The trade unions should at once call on the proletariat of the whole Soviet Union to launch a general strike to end the attacks on the Baltic states, to bring and end to Gorbachev's presidential dictatorship and to fight for the establishment of a regime of workers' councils.

Internationally the proletariat must fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all SAF and KGB troops from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

- Down with the bloody butchers of Vilnius! Soviet troops out now!
- Hands off Lithuania, Latvia and all republics desiring separation!
- For an independent workers' state in Lithuania!
- Down with Gorbachev's coup!
- For proletarian political revolution!
- No imperialist sanctions against the USSR!
- Defend the USSR against any imperialist intervention!

International Secretariat of the LRCI
15 January 1991

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The value of an International

WARS MAKE or break workers' Internationals. The First International had its finest hour during the Franco-Prussian war and the struggle of the Paris Commune that followed it in 1871. It was broken organisationally in the aftermath of the Commune's tragic defeat.

The Second International, despite its pledges to declare "war on war", collapsed at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Its fraternal parties rejected internationalism and called on their respective working classes to "defend the fatherland"—in other words to fight each other on behalf of the imperialists.

The Third (Communist) International was forged in the furnace of the imperialist war and founded with mass support in its revolutionary aftermath. It was formally dissolved during the Second World War as a favour by Stalin to the allied imperialists.

Trotsky founded the Fourth International on the eve of the Second World War and geared it to the revolutionary tasks that were to be posed in that conflict. It collapsed when it failed to understand, and respond in a revolutionary manner to, the aftermath of that war. Anticipating a third world war as the inevitable outcome of the cold war it yielded to the pressures of Stalinism and social democracy.

At first wars always seem to make a mockery of Karl Marx's saying that "the workers have no fatherland", and of his great rallying cry, "workers of all countries unite". The wave of patriotism which engulfs the working class at the outset of a war and which pits worker against worker in their differing national uniforms, seems to obliterate the great ideals of international class solidarity.

But wars do not suppress these ideals completely. As the fighting develops and takes its toll on the class that suffers directly, the working class, the patriotic wave can ebb and even disappear. International class solidarity can be resurrected and given new strength and impetus.

There is one condition for such an outcome. It is the existence of a revolutionary international able to keep alive the ideas of internationalism, even if only among a very few.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), despite its small forces, has done its internationalist duty in the current war. The International Secretariat of the LRCI issued a call to action on the first day the fighting broke out. It has been published in English, German and Spanish.

At the same time we have appealed to all organisations who regard themselves as revolutionary Trotskyists to endorse this statement, amending and developing it if necessary. This, we hope, will enable the efforts to win the mass anti-war movements to anti-imperialism to be coordinated and made more effective. We hope it will lay the basis for regroupment of all the forces which pass the test of imperialist war.

Our sections have moved into action, fighting not simply to get the internationalist voice heard amidst the patriotic din, but to win workers to action against all aspects of imperialism's attack on Iraq.

In Germany, the Trotskyist Tendency in the PDS intervened in the mass demonstrations in Bremen and Berlin. One of its supporters addressed the protest, calling for the PDS to turn its resources to the factories in order to mobilise direct action against the bloodbath.

In Austria the comrades of ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Workers' Standpoint) have played a leading role in the anti-war movement in Vienna, building a vocal contingent around anti-imperialist demands on a spontaneous demonstration on 17 January.

In Britain we have thrown ourselves into the rash of demonstrations, raised the question of solidarity with Iraq at our workplace meetings and union branches.

This and the experience of our Irish, Peruvian and French comrades shows what a real revolutionary international could do.

But the LRCI's forces are tiny. Almost nowhere are we a real factor in events. We are an international of fighting propaganda groups. This means that even in a war situation our agitation can only be "exemplary", showing what can be done in one area of the class struggle as a guide to action for conscious socialists fighting in the whole working class. Such agitation has to be combined with focused propaganda aiming to win those most committed to revolutionary socialism and turn them into revolutionary cadres for the LRCI—that is to be able to fight for leadership within the workers' movement.

In every country where the LRCI has sections or sympathisers the onset of war has brought a sharp increase in literature sales. On the French demo of 26 January forty copies of the LRCI's programme, the *Trotskyist Manifesto* were sold. Youth, in particular Arab youth, read the LRCI's leaflet and came back for more copies to distribute themselves. In the USA the new issue of *International Trotskyist*, the magazine of our fraternal group the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency, has been selling well in the continuous cycle of demonstrations and actions against the war. In Austria the LRCI section organised its biggest ever public meeting in Vienna. In Britain, although full reports are not yet available, it is clear that many branches of Workers Power have almost doubled their regular paper sales.

The anti-imperialist message is being heard. The LRCI is fully committed to the fight, in Lenin's words, to turn imperialist war into civil war. We call on all groups and individuals who agree with us to join us. ■

The LRCI
ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)
The Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA) and the GAM (Ost) are sympathising sections. Poder Obrero (OCIR) (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

TURKEY'S MINERS remain locked in struggle with the state run coal board. They have been on strike for two months and are solid in the face of military repression and extreme hardship.

The 48,000 miners are demanding 500% wage increases, no privatisation of the mines, no pit closures and the right of unions to take industrial and political action. They get approximately £90 a month, they have a much lower average life expectancy than other workers. During the last few years accidents at work have killed more than three thousand miners.

In 1980 the Turkish military, with the full backing of NATO, carried out a coup. They installed first their own military ruler and later the "constitutional" dictatorship of Turgut Ozal. The primary objective of these unelected regimes was to terrorise the traditionally militant workers' movement into submission. For the last ten years they seemed to be enjoying success. The left wing union federation, DISK, was smashed as hundreds of union activists were rounded up, imprisoned and tortured. There was a mass trial of DISK members and at one point they faced the prospect of the death penalty simply because they were trade unionists. Inevitably, this repression took its toll on the combativeness of the workers.

Having achieved this—on behalf of its imperialist masters as well as the country's own bosses—the Turkish state drove down wages and paved the way for an economic bonanza. Profits flowed while the masses' misery intensified. But, like all of capitalism's "miracles", the boom was shortlived. Turkey now suffers from chronic underinvestment inflation is around 80% per month, and unemployment has risen as industries have started to collapse.

Faced with the prospect of paying for this new economic crisis the Turkish workers' movement, which has been painstakingly rebuilt in the face of the ban on strikes, turned on Ozal's regime. A wave of strikes took place in 1990 and mass demonstrations during last year's May Day celebrations were fired on by police and troops. At the beginning of December the miners came out on all out strike. Just after Christmas they were followed into action by 150,000 engineers and metal workers. Early this year textile and paper workers joined the fray.

The moderate trade union federation, Turk-Is, found itself compelled to call a one day general strike in support of the miners despite the wishes of many of its leaders. On 3 January two million workers struck. They defied a court ban on their action and a threat to conduct "investigations" into a number of union leaders and ac-

TURKEY The miners strike back!

Ten years after a military coup crushed the Turkish labour movement the miners are leading a mass strike wave—against poverty and imperialist war writes Arthur Merton

tivists.

This spurred the miners on. They launched a march on Ankara to besiege Ozal's presidential palace. Around 80,000 people—miners, their wives and their supporters—joined the march. The military moved in to block it, but it forced the bosses to offer negotiations. After five days the leadership of the miners' union called off the march and took up negotiations, but so far there has been no deal.

The strikers have demanded the right to take political action and they have thrown the Ozal government into crisis, causing resignations and rifts amongst the ruling clique. As part of his strategy to counter this, as well as to please his Western masters, Ozal has taken Turkey to the brink of war with Iraq.

He has cut off Iraq's pipeline through Turkey, he has allowed US planes to fly from bases close to Iraq's border and he has turned that part of Kurdistan imprisoned within Turkish borders into even more of a war zone than before. Troops there are not only conducting their usual war against the Kurds. They are making ready for war with Iraq.

By going to war Ozal hopes to break the widespread support for the miners by appealing to national unity. But if that fails war will also be his pretext for introducing martial law and unleashing the military against the miners.

In response the workers' movement has inscribed "No to the War" on its banners. It has become a central slogan in the miners' strike. On the demonstrations during and after the 3 January general strike, it was taken up by thousands of workers.

The imperialists tell us that their war against Iraq is "for democracy". The Turkish workers know differently. Their rulers are trusted allies of the imperialists. They have been supported by Britain, the USA and Germany for the last decade

despite their record of torture, despite the fact that they run a semi-dictatorship and despite the fact that the workers currently on strike are breaking the law against industrial action introduced by the military and maintained by Ozal.

If the imperialists are so concerned about democracy why have they not lifted a finger in support of democracy in Turkey? Why do we hear no howls of protest from John Major and George Bush about the 16 year old Turkish girl currently facing a possible 15 year prison sentence simply because she put up a "No War" poster? They remained silent at the end of January when the Turkish police shot and seriously wounded six unarmed anti-war demonstrators and arrested more than a hundred others.

If the imperialists are so concerned about armies occupying smaller neighbours, why have they equipped the Turkish army with the military means to maintain their brutal occupation of Kurdistan? The Turkish workers are not fooled by imperialism's hypocrisy, or by their own rulers' attempts to jump on the war-wagon and grab a share of the spoils.

Their action against their own bosses, for their own demands and against the war, points the way for workers in Britain. Step up the class struggle and fight to stop the imperialist war against Iraq. Turkish workers deserve our full support. ■

Send messages of support direct to:
Genel Maden-Is, Sendikası, Zonguldak, Turkey.
And affiliate to:
The Solidarity Committee with Striking Miners - Turkey,
c/o Trade Union Support Unit, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London, E8 4AU
Tel: 071 241 0943



Women march to support striking miners

IN JUNE 1990 the Socialist Workers Party-USA (SWP-US) announced in a short letter to the USFI that it was leaving, citing "incompatible trajectories" as the reason. This came as no surprise to anyone who has followed the political trajectory of the SWP.

In the early 1980s they had, under the leadership of Jack Barnes, publicly repudiated Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. They saw this perspective as an "obstacle" to fusing their political current with the Castroites whom they declared to be "revolutionary Marxists", as well as other Stalinist or Stalinist influenced petit bourgeois nationalists such as the Sandinistas or the ANC. For good measure they declared that the vast majority of those who called themselves "Trotskyists" were sectarians and that few in the movement would call themselves Trotskyist before the decade was out.

Abandonment

The SWP was one of the founding sections of Trotsky's Fourth International and one of the larger and more stable sections of the fused USFI from 1963. Its open condemnation of Trotsky's theory and perspectives was accompanied by a number of purges and expulsions which gave rise at one time to five different organisations claiming sympathising status with the USFI!

The SWP-US's explicit abandonment of the theory of permanent revolution led them to openly espouse the positions of the ANC on the South African revolution during the revolutionary crisis of 1984-86. Here they openly advocated limiting the struggle to a democratic revolution and denounced as ultra-left any talk of the struggle for socialism during this period of the "first stage of the revolution".

It says much about the "democratic centralism" practiced within the USFI that, throughout this decade, the USFI leadership made no attempt to expel or sever their connections with their "comrades" who advocated a Stalinist "stages theory" in one of the most momentous revolutionary crises of the 1980s.

The USFI never was a democratic centralist international. It is a collection of groups held together by supposed adherence to the *Transitional Programme* of 1938 and resolutions adopted every five or six years at its congresses.

Bewildering

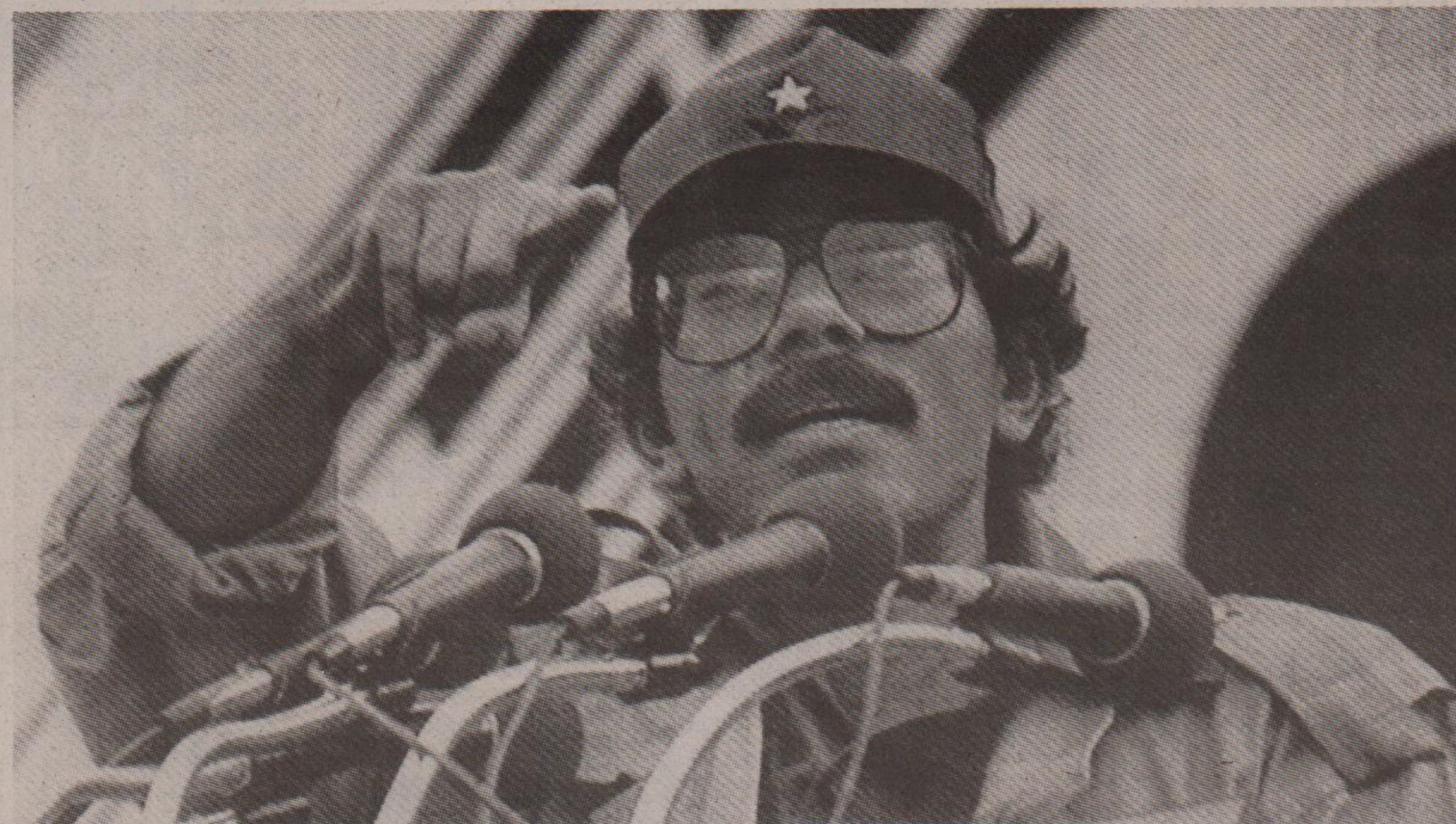
The USFI has always functioned as a series of factions and tendencies, often based on the national sections, combining and re-combining in bewildering series of political blocs according to their attitude to the latest "project" of the leadership. The only consistent principle in this centrist "dance of death" being that the "big" national sections can go their own way without interference from the international leadership.

The second reason for ignoring the SWP's revisionism was that the leadership of the USFI had itself in practice abandoned Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution (from the inception of the USFI in 1963), and the necessity of the fight for the independence of the proletariat and its party that flows from it.

In Cuba, in Vietnam, in China, in Algeria, in Nicaragua, the USFI leadership have shown themselves to be the willing pupils of Michel Pablo. It was Pablo who in the 1940s first developed the idea that the revolutionary party and its programme was not an essential factor in making a revolution. A "blunt instrument" would do, whether this was a Stalinist or petit bourgeois nationalist formation did not really matter as long as it could be declared "revolutionary centrist", "leftward moving" or

USFI 13TH CONGRESS

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) is the largest international group claiming to be Trotskyist. Delegates attending its 13th Congress this month will have had nothing to cheer about. Six years on from their last Congress they can only register a further decline in numbers and influence and greater political disorientation, writes John McKee



Nicaragua's ex-President Daniel Ortega

Disorientation and decline

"projecting a revolutionary orientation"

The 12th World Congress in 1985 confirmed this perspective, and accentuated it. As in previous periods of the centrist FI/USFI's history its leadership spotted the emergence of new "revolutionary" forces with which it hoped to merge to produce a "mass international".

In 1948 Tito in Yugoslavia who was seen as the first of many Stalinist leaderships to project "a revolutionary orientation". In the 1960s it was Castro and the Castroite guerrillaist currents which the USFI sought to merge with.

By the mid 1980s the Sandinista government of Nicaragua had been promoted by the USFI from a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" to a "Dictatorship of the Proletariat"! The Twelfth World Congress in its resolution "Building the Fourth International" argued that the Sandinistas were not the only organisation outside the Fourth International "struggling resolutely and honestly for the victory of the proletarian revolution in their country. There certainly exist future Sandinistas in several countries today, whether we know of them or not".

From this analysis it was able to declare, "at this very moment, the international development of the class struggle, the advances of the revolution, the establishment of new workers' states, are fostering a general trend towards a recomposition of the workers' movement and its vanguard". On this basis it argued for a "rapprochement" of its sections with "a broad spectrum of forces breaking to varying degrees with reformism, Stalinism and nationalist populism". (Resolutions of the 12th World Congress, *International Viewpoint Special* 1985)

This "rapprochement" could take varying forms ranging from "systematic united actions" through to "unifications". Where mergers took place "affiliation to the Fourth International should not constitute a principled precondition" i.e. being part

of the Fourth International of agreeing with its programme was not to obstruct a quick fusion.

The result of this latest short cut to the masses was predictably a disaster. Far from winning new forces to a "mass international" in country after country where the USFI had sections, its members and indeed whole sections liquidated into this "broad spectrum of forces" never to reappear! In Peru, Hugo Blanco led a demoralised and dwindling band of USFI members into the left reformist PUM. A party whose leaders, as part of the United Left, endorsed the victory of Fujimori just before he launched his reactionary anti-working class austerity measures.

Disappeared

In Colombia, the section disappeared without trace into another reformist organisation, A Luchar.

The German section, the GIM, split over who the "new forces" were, some deciding it was the Greens, others that it was a right centrist group of ex-Maoists, the VSP, which predictably refused to have anything to do with the USFI internationally.

In Italy, the LCR dissolved their organisation into Democrazia Proletaria, retaining individual membership of the USFI and making few gains in this crisis wracked rightward moving organisation.

In Britain the USFI's supporters split into two camps over which section of the Labour left was the "blunt instrument", with *Socialist Action* merging with the Livingstones and *Socialist Outlook* becoming the footsoldiers of Tony Benn.

In other areas of the world where the USFI did not have sections and where it decided there were already actual or potential "Sandinistas" no attempt was made to bring together a revolutionary nucleus.

In South Africa throughout the massive revolutionary upheavals of the mid-1980s the USFI remained paralysed unable to make up its mind where the "mass anti capitalist

force" would emerge from, sometimes looking to AZAPO and the black consciousness movement, sometimes to the ANC.

In Eastern Europe, after it burnt its fingers in Poland funding a section that did not exist, the USFI leadership concentrated on winning dissident intellectuals and advising them to remain as leaders in the amorphous opposition movements rather than attempt to build Trotskyist organisations.

Peter Uhl, a leader of Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, and USFI member, quickly ended up after the collapse of the Stalinists as a minor spokesperson for the bourgeois restorationist government of Vaclav Havel!

Most dramatically it was Nicaragua that revealed yet again the complete bankruptcy of the USFI's policies and how it abandoned the perspective of permanent revolution in a semi-colonial country. At the first whiff of a revolution and a mass movement the USFI quickly declared there was no need for a Trotskyist organisation or party. It was necessary to be "loyal militants of the FSLN".

The FSLN clearly declared its aim as being the preservation of a mixed economy during the stage of "national reconstruction". The USFI showed itself to be the most slavish apologist for a policy which could only in the end undermine the gains the workers and peasants had made in the revolution of 1979.

By 1985 the USFI "recognised" that Nicaragua was a workers' state, "the second free territory of the Americas" (*International Viewpoint Special* p94). The USFI has stuck with this analysis through thick and thin, flying in the face of reality.

In 1989 the Sandinista government launched a vicious attack on the masses' living standards. Government-sponsored hyperinflation led to increasing poverty as wages failed to keep up and price control was relaxed. And when workers threatened to fight back, Sandinista

leader Jaime Wheelock replied "Whoever raises the flag of strike action will have their hands cut off".

In July 1989 the USFI's French-language journal, *Inprecor*, in reporting the Sandinistas' austerity programme opined that it was "undoubtedly necessary" and merely "a tactic" in the construction of this "workers' state". It is a strange dictatorship of the proletariat where capitalist exploitation is encouraged and the workers are asked to make all the economic sacrifices.

Despite the complete absence of all forms of workers' control or workers' democracy, the USFI claimed with astonishing hyperbole that "More than ten years after the seizure of power, revolutionary Nicaragua is the most advanced form of democracy the twentieth century has seen" (*Inprecor* 291 p6).

Verdict

Eight months later, February 1990, the Nicaraguan masses gave their verdict on this "workers' state" by voting out the Sandinistas and returning the right wing UNO coalition, led by Violeta Chamorro.

Did this lead to a change of position by the USFI? No. A document adopted by the June 1990 IEC of the USFI lambasts those "sectarians" who dared to suggest that this defeat had anything to do with the economic policies of the Sandinista government. For the USFI it is "sectarian" to point out that an economy where 60% is in private hands, and where the private owners receive the vast bulk of state investment and support, cannot be moving towards a workers' state let alone be one!

For the authors of this document it was not the fact that the FSLN attempted to maintain an alliance with the private capitalists at the expense of the workers and peasants which led to its defeat. Nor was it the fact that this leadership always rejected the necessity of actively spreading the revolution throughout Central America.

While the IEC has a few minor criticisms to make of the Sandinista policies, in the final analysis they endorse the strategy which led to the defeat as the only course possible:

Weaknesses

"The Nicaraguan revolution was, more than anything else, a national, popular, democratic and anti-imperialist revolution where the class struggle demands were not the central ones. This is not important. This limited class struggle profile was not due, as some sectarians could think, to the weaknesses of the leadership or the policy of alliances with the leadership. The explanation is a little deeper. The Sandinista strategy for taking power was the only one possible in a country like Nicaragua" (*Central America Today*, *International Marxist Review* Summer 1990).

For the USFI, "class struggle demands" (i.e. the struggle for socialism) might be on the agenda in the imperialist countries but, in a semi-colonial country like Nicaragua, the workers and peasants will have to content themselves with a "democratic" revolution. What is this if not an open abandonment of the theory of permanent revolution and an endorsement of the Menshevik and Stalinist theory of a revolution in two stages?

At the 13th Congress, the leadership will no doubt pass over the complete failure of its "party building" perspectives in silence. On the Nicaraguan revolution it will continue to cover its tracks. This has been the method in the past and will be in the future. It is the method of centrism; as bankrupt in party building as it is in political programme. For any serious revolutionary within the USFI, there is only one viable course of action—leave it!■

REVOLUTIONARY communists believe that the war against Iraq is being conducted in the interests of imperialism. The working class has everything to lose by a victory for our rulers in this war, and everything to gain from bringing about its defeat. Because the Iraqi ruling class and its army is temporarily fighting against the imperialists we have to make a military united front with them against a common enemy. That is why we take sides in this war, why we want a victory for Iraq and a defeat for "our" army.

To say that such a position is difficult to argue in conditions of war would be putting it mildly.

Revolutionaries in imperialist countries have always been in a tiny minority at the outbreak of war. We will be denounced not only by the ruling class, its press, the Labour and trade union leadership but also from within the anti-war movement itself. If the war goes badly for our rulers, or we begin to win a hearing amongst masses of workers, we will be subject to repression.

But it is essential to argue a clear revolutionary position on the war, despite its initial unpopularity. Why?

A victory for imperialism in the Gulf will strengthen our own ruling class and will be a defeat of enormous proportions for the exploited and oppressed masses of the Middle East. It will be a clear signal from the imperialists that their interests cannot be touched. Kuwait will become the centre of a new "security" arrangement which will allow permanent and easy military intervention in the region.

Tool

Israel, America's most reliable tool in the region, will be strengthened and the Palestinian struggle weakened. In Britain, Major and the Tories will return from war as victors, prepared to fight an election on that basis. Major is already riding high in the polls on the strength of his handling of the conflict.

We also want to see imperialism defeated because our aim is to end this war in a revolutionary fashion, in a way that strengthens the working class and weakens our rulers.

Lenin put it clearly at the start of the 1914-18 war:

"Only a bourgeois who believes that a war started by governments must necessarily end as a war between governments, and wants it to end as such, can regard as 'ridiculous' and 'absurd' the idea that the socialists of all the belligerent countries should express their wish that all their 'own' governments should be defeated." (Lenin, *Socialism and War*, 1914)

Like Lenin in 1914 we believe it is possible to turn this war into a civil war: we want a war started by governments to end as a war between classes.

Objective

Whether such an aim becomes realisable depends on a number of factors. But this objective should guide the actions and arguments of Marxists in a war, and in particular their efforts to win class conscious workers to such a position. Only on this basis will it be possible to take advantage of reverses for the ruling class at a later stage of the war.

Marxists should have no hesitation in supporting wars waged by the oppressed peoples against the imperialists. Whether it is in Vietnam or Ireland, where a guerrilla movement appeals to "the people" and speaks the language of socialism, or in Argentina and Iraq where

THE LEFT AND THE WAR

The acid test



US and (right) Iraqi troops prepare for battle

anti-socialist military dictators attempt to "lead the nation" against imperialism, the essential character of the war remains the same.

Victory for these struggles will be a defeat for imperialism and its world system of exploitation and oppression.

How has the self-proclaimed revolutionary left in Britain coped with the task of applying these principles to the Gulf War?

Before the shooting started *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* pledged their commitment to the defence of Iraq.

"We would be for an American defeat and therefore for an Iraqi victory" the SWP resolved in December 1990.

Peter Taaffe, writing in response to *Militant* readers' questions about the war insisted:

"For the working class in Britain and throughout the advanced industrial countries there should be implacable opposition to imperialist intervention." (*Militant* 1010)

and:
"It would be mistaken to suggest that *Militant* can assume a neutral position on the Gulf".

(*Militant* 1013)
But such commitments were shelved once the onset of war brought tens of thousands of pacifist and reformist inclined workers onto the streets.

In the issues of *Socialist Worker* published since the outbreak of war there has not been one mention of the defence of Iraq. Even in obscure articles like Chris Harman's "Socialists and the War", where the defence of Iraq could have been tucked away in the fine print, the argument is missing. The *Socialist Worker* pamphlet *No to War in the Gulf* mentions only in passing that:

"Socialists must hope that Iraq gives the US a bloody nose and that the US is frustrated in its attempts to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait." (p21).

That is the grand total of *Socialist Worker's* attempts to put its principles into practice. In the workers' movement the SWP has resolutely opposed any attempt to raise solidarity with the Iraqi people being bombed by "our boys". In Hackney NUT, for example, the SWP voted against the union tak-

ing a position in defence of Iraq. The experience has been repeated throughout the country.

Militant's list of demands on the war is certainly not minimalist. It goes all the way to the goal of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. But it forgets to mention that one step on the road to this goal will involve united action now with the Arab masses and the Iraqi army to kick the imperialist troops out! The nearest *Militant* gets to support for Iraq is in its editorial on 25 January, which says:

"The imperialists must be forced to retreat and leave the peoples of the whole Middle East to fight for the socialist federation."

It conveniently refrains from informing us about its attitude to the present struggle to

force imperialism out except to say "we can give no support to an imperialist war to topple Saddam". That is what thousands of pacifists, much derided by the "Marxist" *Militant*, are fighting for. But real Marxism fights for something more than this: the military victory of Iraq.

The main justification many SWP members and *Militant* supporters give for this retreat is that to argue for defence of Iraq today is sectarian, that it cuts revolutionaries off from the mass anti-war movement.

This would be true if we insisted that workers had to agree with the defence of Iraq in order to take action against the war. But we don't. The workers' united front against this war can begin around the most minimal goals and demands.

If workers go on strike because they don't agree with NHS services being cut in order to treat casualties, or because they want Bush and Major to revert to sanctions instead of war, revolutionaries will not stand aside from this struggle. We will intervene and try to develop workers' understand-

Socialist Worker and Militant pledged to take sides in the war. Then the shooting started, writes Paul Morrison.



ing of the wider issues involved.

Militant and *Socialist Worker* claim they are doing this by fighting for two main slogans: Stop the War, Troops Out of the Gulf. It will certainly be necessary to unite in action with workers around these aims and to conduct a fight in the pacifist movement for them.

But on their own these slogans will raise an immediate question in the minds of workers and youth:

"If we stop the war now, pull the troops out and stop the sanctions, that will leave Saddam in charge of Kuwait. He will have won, won't he? Do you really want Iraq to win?"

Answer

It is a revolutionary organisation's job to give a clear answer to this. No-one else will do it for us. We don't have to insist workers agree with that answer in order to oppose the war. But we do have to point out the logical conclusion of being a socialist, an internationalist, in an imperialist country which is bombing the life out of one of its former colonies.

This is the job *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* have set out consciously to avoid.

The point was not lost on *Tribune's* political gossip columnist John Street. In the 25 January edition he lists all the groups, including Workers Power, who have taken some form of defencist position on Iraq, then comments:

"Perhaps all these minnows need to learn a few lessons from the big fish, who keep their enthusiasm for Iraqi victory under wraps.

Socialist Worker and *Militant* limit themselves to calling for American and British troops to be withdrawn from the Gulf, without spelling out the consequences of such action—military victory for Iraq."

If this Labour left dilettante can spot the inconsistency then thousands of workers and youth will be able to spot it as well.

The argument that raising our revolutionary position will "isolate"

us from the broader anti-war movement is both short sighted and narrowly national centred.

It is short sighted because the war does have the potential to end as a war between classes. If it leads to mass movements against the Arab governments who support the allies, to Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians, to Turkish attempts to annex northern Iraq etc then class war could erupt. Revolutionaries cannot seriously argue for turning the conflict into a war between classes at while at the same time trying to impersonate hand-wringing liberals calling simply for the fighting to stop.

It is national centred because, from the viewpoint of the world working class revolutionary defeatists in Britain will not be isolated. When we fight for "Victory to Iraq" in Britain we are acting as the small advance guard of a movement of millions which sees US imperialism as the main enemy.

If we are serious about turning this war into a war between classes we have to follow Trotsky's method of critical support for Iraq, placing demands on the bourgeois leaders aimed at dispelling the Middle Eastern masses' illusions in dictators like Saddam.

Advised

As Trotsky advised the Chinese communists involved in a united front with dictator Chiang Kai-shek against Japan:

"Politically they should criticise Chiang Kai-shek not for making war but for making it in an ineffective manner, without high taxation of the bourgeois class, without sufficient arming of the workers and peasants etc." (Trotsky, *Concerning the Resolution on War* 1937)

For Trotsky, unity in action with bourgeois and petit bourgeois leaders against imperialism was not some unpleasant duty enforced by Marxist principle. It was a vital and indispensable tactic to break the masses from their illusions in such leaders. Trotsky was prepared to place demands on leaders like Chiang Kai-shek in order to explode the workers' and peasants' illusions.

If anyone doubts the need for such tactics in the Gulf war they should count the number of babies given the name Saddam in the Arab world since the crisis started! Even in Britain socialists have received loud applause from Asian workers when they have argued for the defence of Iraq.

It is necessary both to build on these islands of support for anti-imperialism and to banish the illusions some British Muslim workers have in Saddam. We can't do this by hiding the fact that we defend Iraq, or by telling Asian workers to hide it as well.

Explain

None of this means we have to deliberately shock workers and youth with our position. Revolutionaries have a duty to patiently explain how opposition to the war must lead to active opposition to imperialism's war aims. We challenge *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* to prove that Workers Power neglects this task.

But in the end, as Karl Marx put it, "Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims". We do not regard revolutionary demands as commodities too precious to be entrusted to the minds of workers. Only when they are embedded in the minds of millions of workers and peasants can revolution become a reality. And the first step to achieving this is that self-proclaimed revolutionaries stop hiding their principles. ■

No votes here!

Dear comrades,
British Stalinism entered what may well be the final stage of its terminal decline with the convening in January of a "consultative conference on communist unity".

The "conference" was called by the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) following its leadership's defeat over this issue at its last congress.

The event brought together around 250 members of the CPB, New Communist Party (NCP), a few from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and a number of "unaffiliated communists".

From its opening moments it was clear that the event was not to be a consultative conference on



Derek Robinson

communist unity but a cross between a wake and a morale boosting rally.

In opening the rally Derek Robinson, CPB chair, declared that there were to be no resolutions or votes taken! When a Workers Power supporter and former CP member tried to move an emergency resolution on the Gulf, around which genuine "communist unity" in anti-imperialist action could be built, it was ruled out of order. Robinson declared "you can challenge the chair as much as you like, we're not

having any votes". Even in its last moments, Stalinism sticks to its old basic methods!

In reality it would have been difficult to get unity between the Stalinists themselves, let alone any action around anti-imperialist slogans on the Gulf war.

Mike Hicks, CPB General Secretary, made the first speech in which, whilst calling for "a stop to the imperialist war", he demanded that Iraq quit Kuwait and made clear his party's support for UN sanctions.

He was followed by Eric Trevett, NCP General Secretary, who told the rally that the UN had been hijacked as a fig leaf for imperialist war and said that account must be given to the just demands of Iraq in a peaceful settlement, though this point was never developed.

The first speaker from the floor made clear what she envisaged by communist unity when she reported to an enthralled audience a joint Stalinist venture in St Pancras which had resulted in the establishment of a socialist film club.

During the remainder of the rally, vacuous calls for "communist unity" followed one another with no real discussion of politics or programme.

Perhaps the most honest assessment was made in the NCP's written submission which stated baldly:

"We in Britain now face the question of how we can ensure the survival of a viable communist organisation after the end of financial solidarity support from former socialist countries".

When the cheques from the Czechs dried up the NCP sent Trevett to North Korea to cadge "financial solidarity" from Kim Il Sung—an event of such significance that it was apparently featured on North Korean television!

It is the CPB's similar financial plight, after Moscow cancelled its order for the *Morning Star*, which pushed the warring factions of "orthodox" Stalinism into the unity process. But the process only highlights these organisations' political as well as financial bankruptcy.

A genuine communist party cannot be built from these fragments. Those left within them should turn to the genuine, revolutionary and anti-imperialist communism represented by Trotskyism and enter into discussions with Workers Power.

In comradeship
David Holt

Workers Power

Become a supporter!

IF YOU hate the war, if you hate the bosses and their system and you want to do something about it, become a Workers Power supporter.

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation fighting to build a revolutionary working class party.

We are communists because we want to see an end to poverty, unemployment, the misery and suffering caused by the profit system and the daily oppression of women, black people, youth, lesbians and gay men. We believe the working class can end all this by taking hold of the wealth and the technology of modern capitalism and using it to meet human need. The laser and computer technology being used in the Gulf today, together with the £100,000s wasted on each bomb, could be used to eradicate hunger, disease and homelessness.

We are internationalists. We do not regard the workers' of other countries as the "enemy". We believe they are our brothers and sisters. Our real enemy is the international capitalist system, which can be fought if we build international unity between workers of all countries. We are actively trying to do this by building an international organisation, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.

We are revolutionaries because we don't think the big businessmen and the generals will simply sit back and let the workers peacefully take over society after a show of hands in Parliament. Struggles in every decade of this century show that the workers will have to smash the bosses' state and build a different kind of state, based on:

- workers' councils elected from every factory, office, housing estate

- a workers' militia instead of the hired thugs of the police and "professional" army
- workers' control and management of every workplace instead of subservience to the supervisor and slavery to the machine.

To bring about a workers' revolution we need to build a revolutionary working class party rooted in every workplace, estate, school and community. This will not come about automatically: it needs people prepared to commit themselves 100% to the fight for revolutionary politics.

If you want to join that fight, and you agree with the ideas and arguments in this paper, take the first step. Send off this coupon now:

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OUT NOW! NEW PAMPHLET ON GULF WAR



The new pamphlet just out from Workers Power gives you the arguments you need to win action against the Gulf War.

It explains what the war is about, why sanctions and the United Nations are no alternative to war and why workers must support Iraq against the imperialist attack.

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WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties, tied to the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary international (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!



Strikes in Greece

Dear comrades,

The Mitsokakis government announced it would release all of Greece's former military dictators on 15 January. A mass outcry ensured this did not happen. In reply, organised paramilitary thugs of Mitsokakis' New Democracy party in Patras killed a left wing teacher. In the violence and terror that followed another three were killed as the government tried to crush student occupations. But the student struggles instead sparked a strike movement amongst the Greek working class.

The Greek Communist Party (KKE) and the former ruling party, Pan-Hellenic Socialists (Pasok) were nowhere to be seen—except in parliament, shaking hands with Mitsokakis. As many of the slogans of the student and workers' demos show, the workers' movement in Greece is clearly entering into a generalised conflict, the like of which has not been seen since the civil war of the late 1940s. It must not be forgotten that the party now in power traces its roots back to the right wing generals who smashed the left in the civil war.

The Gulf crisis and Mitsokakis' direct involvement is having disastrous consequences for Greece's fragile capitalist economy, already reeling from New Democracy's Thatcherite economic programme. This has led to the linking of workers' and students' social grievances with opposition to the war. Over 50,000 workers and students demonstrated outside parliament shouting:

"We want a better education, not war and the pigs [police]!

Four dead are enough. Down with the murderous government!

No to poverty, war and terrorism. We want a mass independent movement!

In '63 you killed MPs, now you kill teachers!

In parliament they are all mates: we are the opposition!"

These slogans, and the actions of the KKE and Pasok leaders, show the urgent need for a new revolutionary leadership in Greece.

Yours fraternally
V N Gellis

Workers Power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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- Crackdown in USSR

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BALTIC STATES

UNDER THE IRON HEEL

Black Berets stormed the Latvian Interior Ministry killing four civilians and injuring eight. However the seizure of the building proved abortive, apparently due to intervention from Moscow. Certainly any further moves, given the massive mobilisations in Riga would have led to a fearful bloodbath.

Dangerous

At the last moment someone in Moscow, probably Gorbachev himself decided that to press ahead with removing the Latvian government would prove too dangerous both internally and in terms of his good relations with the imperialists. The special forces were withdrawn to barracks. The next day Colonel Alksnis has revealed, Rubiks the CP chief phoned him to say "You were right. Moscow betrayed us".

Alksnis himself told the weekly magazine, *Argumenty i Fakty*, that Gorbachev had betrayed the military because he "is afraid to assume responsibility". Clearly Alksnis himself is not afraid. He warned that the Baltic conflict "would inevitably grow into a civil war on a union-wide scale".

Threat

This is an unambiguous threat. It is a direct threat of further military action against the Baltic states. It is a threat that the army repression will spread to every dissident corner of the USSR. That threat must be countered now. Immediately it means saying loud and clear to Gorbachev: **Hands off the Baltic states!**

LITHUANIA AND Latvia have become the testing grounds for Gorbachev's new draconian presidential powers. The rebellious Baltic republics have been targeted for fierce military and KGB repression. The violence meted out against the people of the countries should serve as a clear warning of what lies in store for the whole USSR.

Gorbachev's triumvirate of hard men, Yazov, Pugo, and Kryuchkov, deliberately engineered a confrontation in Latvia and Lithuania to justify the crackdown. On 7 January paratroops were ordered to the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, to enforce conscription.

Pretext

That this was merely a pretext for general repression was demonstrated with their first action. They placed the Vilnius press building and other public buildings "under protection".

The nationalist Sajudis government, headed by Kazimiera Prunskiene, was about to introduce a price "reform" that would triple prices. This unpopular proposal was met with a massive protest demonstration and strike. Sections of the crowd tried to storm the parliament.

Faced with this unrest the Lithuanian president, Landsbergis, claimed that there were "many Russians and Poles and many drunks" in the crowd. Probably the KGB or the military had their agents at work.

Angry

But most of the crowd were simply Lithuanian workers angry at the price increases. In any case, fearful of losing his mass base, Landsbergis engineered Prunskiene's defeat in parliament on the price rises and she resigned at once.

Encouraged by the Sajudis government's difficulties the Baltic Army command struck. They were emboldened because of the small numbers who responded to Landsbergis' summons to come to the parliament to defend the



government.

On 11 January troops occupied the Lithuanian Defence Council Building using as a pretext the fact that the Lithuanian Government had been organising an independent army contrary to Soviet law. True as this was, the "army" concerned was virtually unarmed and not the slightest threat to the massive Soviet Armed Forces.

In the early hours of 13 January paratroops using tanks stormed the TV tower. Fourteen unarmed people were killed. The response from the Lithuanian masses, protests in Moscow from republican representatives, an unfavourable, if muted, response from the White House and from European capitals led to a week of duplicitous statements and counter-statements from Pugo and Gorbachev.

At first they tried to sug-

gest there was aggression and provocation from the Lithuanian government. Then they attempted to shift the responsibility onto the local commanders. Finally came the grudging and hypocritical expressions of regret and promises of an enquiry.

Offensive

But the forces of bureaucratic clamp down returned to the offensive in Latvia. Here the forces of opposition to independence are numerous and powerful. Riga, the capital, is the seat of the Soviet Baltic military region and 15% of the republic's resident population are Soviet soldiers. In addition 48% of Latvia's population are non-Latvians (in 1939 this figure stood at 23%).

The Latvian Popular Front is confronted by the largest old-style, hard line

opposition, the Latvian Interfront. It has about 300,000 members, many of whom are soldiers. Nevertheless the Latvian Popular Front draws considerable support from the Russian speaking community and was thus able to win just under two thirds of the seats in the Supreme Soviet of Latvia in the 18 March 1990 elections.

The hard line forces have powerful links with Moscow, as events were to prove. Boris Pugo was, until September 1988, the First Party Secretary in Latvia and head of the Latvian KGB. Even more crucial to events is the fact that the leader of the ultra hard-line faction in the Supreme Soviet, "Soyuz" (Union), Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Alksnis is from Latvia. He was clearly a major inspiration behind the All Latvian National Salvation Committee, along with the CP leader Alfred

Rubiks.

On 15 January in Riga they addressed a 150,000 strong rally in the army stadium calling for the immediate overthrow of the Latvian government. Alksnis told the rally they were the supreme power in the republic. The same night the Police Academy in Riga was stormed by the elite paramilitary squad, the "Black Berets".

Denounced

The commander of the Baltic Military region General Fyodor Kuzmin denounced the Latvian government for promoting attacks on the Soviet garrison in Latvia. The pro-Moscow Latvian CP kept up its call for the overthrow of the government calling for the ethnic Russian "United Front of Working Collectives" to launch a general strike to topple the government and instal the Committee for National Salvation in power.

These classic preparations for a Stalinist putsch provoked massive counter-mobilisations by the Popular Front. On 20 January

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