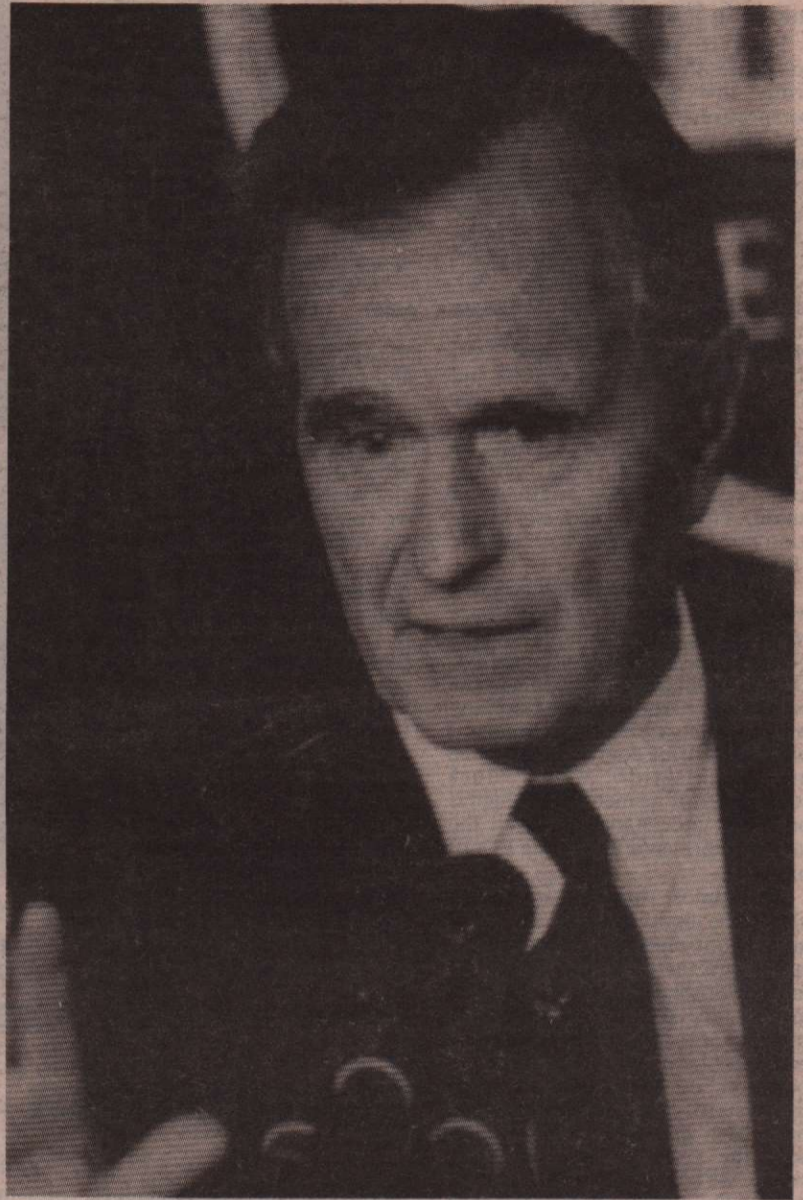


# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

**The main enemy is at home!**



# Bloody hypocrites!

By Eric Heffer MP

*Recall parliament says Eric Heffer*

**B**ritain and the world appear to be drifting into a serious shooting war.

The reactions of the US and other Western governments appear

defensive but could soon turn into the opposite. We are in the most

dangerous situation since the Cuban crisis in the 1960s.

The Thatcher government is committing warships, aircraft and service personnel without the House of Commons being consulted or even informed. Over the Falklands crisis, or even Suez the House of Commons at least expressed its views before action was taken.

There is no doubt the regime in Iraq is anti-democratic and a brutal dictatorship responsible for the death and murders of thousands of people, Kurds, Iraqis and Iranians. It is a regime that cannot be supported by anyone who is a genuine democrat.

**Turn to page 5**

**Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!**

## 2 INTERNATIONAL

# German workers prepare for future conflicts

By Leonore Ansorg

On 27 June, critically minded trade unionists from East and West Germany took part in a joint meeting in response to our appeal 'To Rank and File Activists in Workplaces and Trade Unions!' which was concerned with preparations for the future policies of the DGB (West German equivalent of the TUC, now expanding into East Germany) in a united Germany.

For three and a half hours, 16 colleagues from the GDR and 15 from the West discussed the perspectives of a critical approach to trade union work. The various organisational groupings put forward different political positions. Apart from individual workplace activists and members of Betriebsräte (factory councils, with a strictly limited, legally defined, role), also present were representatives from the Oppositional Nursery Nurses Initiative, the United Left, the Working Group of Greens and Trade Unionists, New Forum, the LRKI, the GEW (West German teachers' union), the Free Workers Union, IG Metall (West German metalworkers and engineering union), etc — and of course the Initiative for Independent Trade Unions itself.

The first question discussed was whether workers in the GDR are really joining the individual unions of the DGB completely unprepared. On this point the participants in the conference from East Germany were certainly united: to many people the DGB of course seems to be an organisation which does something for its members, which is only too understandable given the lack of representation by the FDGB hitherto.

But almost nothing is known about the limitations of the DGB and about various undemocratic rules, and therefore the colleagues in the workplaces are fairly helpless in the face of this. A review of previous experiences is absolutely necessary here. Why should the experiences of West German trade unionists of this institution which have been gathered so laboriously over the years be lost, and why should we begin again from scratch, here in the other part of Germany?

A further point discussed was the development of links with the colleagues in the workplaces. Some regarded direct agitation as more sensible than the 'academic work' referred to above. But a majority of conference participants opposed this. Firstly, those present were employed in various workplaces, and secondly the raising of demands presupposes first and foremost a knowledge of the practice of Western trade unions. Such knowledge has still to be accumulated.

And that is not only in the interest of trade unionists in the East, it was stressed, as on the Western side also there is hardly a systematic

analysis of the points of criticism of trade union work, nor a compilation of various experiences. One representative of the Nursery Nurses initiative lamented the fact that their lack of preparation for a nurseries' strike which had occurred earlier in the year had lost them so much.

A common approach on the part of trade unionists in East and West Germany is necessary if workers are to engage in future struggles with a strong social basis and with the prospect of success. Otherwise they will be played off against each other. And this presupposes knowledge.

In the discussion it was also pointed out that no single overall judgement can be made about the structures of the individual unions in the DGB, but that the spectrum stretches from the IG Metall trade union to the IG Chemie trade union, in which the representation of trade union interests functions completely differently. Therefore — and we have now decided to do this — we will set up a working party to look at 'Rules and Structure of the DGB and the individual unions, and relevant demands'.

In the second working party which we set up it is a question of 'Theory and Practice of Strikes', especially with regard to the struggles which are expected. On 25 July we meet in the offices of the Initiative for Independent Trade Unions in order to report upon the results of the working parties and to test whether our initiative was correct, or whether a different focus for future work must be established.

The goal should be to draw up a single document in which the principal aspects of Western trade union theory and practice are covered.

Overall, the meeting was based upon a common effort to put the political differences into the background in favour of productive co-operation in trade union questions. The delegates were also in agreement that a left-wing critique



West German workers campaign for the 35 hour week

of trade unions cannot remain an 'academic debate', but must become practise — in the interests of the trade union members.

From Bulletin 12, 11 July 1990, Initiative for Independent Trade Unions, East Germany.

## Homeless in Israel

**Adam Keller reports from Israel on the increasing numbers of Jewish homeless there with the influx of Soviet Jews.**

**The influx of Soviet Jews into Israel has aroused great apprehension in the Arab world: all the Israeli government's reassurances**

could not dispel fears of massive deportations and expulsions of Palestinian inhabitants, to make places for the Jewish newcomers.

Nor could the Palestinian fears be dismissed as totally baseless, especially considering that at least one of the parties supporting Shamir's government openly advocates just such massive expulsions.

Paradoxically, however, it is young Israeli Jews — some of them fresh from military service in the Occupied Territories — who are turned out of their homes, to make room for the Soviet immigrants.

This situation came about through the simple operation of the market mechanism: each Soviet Jewish family gets from the government a monthly grant of \$400<sup>1</sup> to pay its rent. Within a few months, the Soviet immigrants snapped up practically all the available free apartments, and caused rents in general to rise steeply. Even small apartments, previously rented for \$150 or \$200 a month, now go for \$400 and more. Young Israeli families, many of whom have monthly incomes totalling no more than \$500 or \$600, have no chance of paying such rents, and a growing number of them are turned out onto the streets.

Overnight, shantytowns and 'tent cities' have sprung up in parks, empty lots and public land in more than 50 sites all over Israel, with

new ones springing up nearly every day; overnight, 'the homeless' have become a social and political problem of paramount significance.

Strictly speaking, such squatting on public land is illegal; however, the homeless squatters enjoy such strong public support that no mayor dares order them evicted by the police; indeed, most mayors were quick to give the shantytowns official recognition and provide them with water and other municipal services.

Nevertheless, with the passage of time bringing no solution, the protest of the homeless is becoming increasingly fierce, with violent demonstrations, clashes with the police, the burning of buses and actions such as the occupation of Bat-Yam Town Hall on 19 July.

With his characteristic bluntness, the new Housing Minister, Ariel Sharon, pressured the government right away into giving him emergency powers for the confiscation of lands and erection of 'quick housing'. These new powers aroused wide opposition: from mayors and Interior Ministry officials, whose planning powers Sharon usurped; from environmentalists; from archeologists; from peace groups, wary of a Sharon plan to drive native Israelis — instead of Russian Jews — into settlements in the Occupied Territories<sup>2</sup>; from Arab citizens, who feared that Sharon would use his new powers for expropriating Arab lands inside the pre-'67 borders, and carry out such

projects as the 'Judaisation of Jaffa'.

On 17 July the Supreme Court stripped Sharon of his emergency powers; it ruled that a recently passed bill, simplifying the procedures for approving construction permits, might be sufficient to solve the Construction Crisis.

So far the homeless themselves have rejected all offers of housing on settlements in the Territories. In numerous demonstrations they reiterated demands for housing in their own towns. Despite the fact that many social groups and political factions are involved in this movement, a fair amount of intercity coordination has emerged; a clear feature is the homeless' view of housing as a right, and their refusal to become objects of casual charity.

In Jerusalem Mapam people the radical 'Black Panthers' are involved in setting up and maintaining a shantytown near the Knesset; in Be'er Sheva, the tents for the local 'tent city' were donated by Bedouins, through the Association for the Defence of Bedouin Rights. This is quite remarkable, since past Israeli social movements were often extremely suspicious towards everything coming from 'leftist peaceniks'.

From 'The Other Israel'

1. Since the huge inflation of the early 1980s, rents in Israel are reckoned in US dollars, rather than in Israeli currency.  
2. Such suspicions were voiced, for example, by KM Yossi Saris (*Ha'aretz*, 8 July 1990).

## South Africa: from alliance to coalition?

**In one week dramatic things have happened in South Africa.**

Last Monday (6th August) the African National Congress abandoned its 30 year long armed struggle. A few days later Nelson Mandela announced that the government and the ANC were now effectively in a 'form of alliance' and hinted that the movement

could soon drop its long-established call for sanctions to isolate the regime.

It seems that full blown negotiations and a new constitution will start early next year shortly after the ANC congress this December.

Could this talk of 'an alliance' be a pre-cursor of some sort of electoral pact which could calm white fears of the effects of one person, one vote?

# Ready to Getcha

## PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

**K**elvin McKenzie, editor of the *Sun*, once boasted that whereas his publication concerned itself with important issues like sex, football and the price of eggs, the *Guardian* was only interested in obscure trivia like the situation in the Middle East.

Mr McKenzie did not do his paper justice. The *Sun* can be very concerned with international affairs — so long as certain requirements can be met, viz:

1. British interests and/or pride at stake.
2. Loony foreign dictator to be reviled and/or ridiculed.
3. Dusky-hued foreign hordes running amok.
4. Mrs Thatcher showing firm grasp and natural leadership qualities while Kinnock, foreigners etc in blue funk.
5. Our Boys (preferably SAS) Going In.

The present Gulf crisis, of course, fulfils all the above criteria beyond Mr McKenzie's wildest dreams; there is even a good domestic price of eggs (or, rather, price of petrol) angle for *Sun* readers who simply cannot be persuaded to take an interest in funny furrin parts. So for the past week or so the likes of Ms Mandy Smith, Paul 'Gazza' Gascoigne, and even the ubiquitous Ninja Turtles, have been ousted from the *Sun*'s front page leads, to be replaced by Iraq and its mustache-dictator.

But first, the villain of the piece had to be clearly established for *Sun* readers who up until a week or so ago had probably never heard of Saddam Hussein and who might still labour under the misapprehension that loony Libyan leader Muammar 'Mad Dog' Gaddafi still occupied the Number One spot in the world's Dangerous Despots charts.

So the *Sun* helpfully listed, "in order of evil and madness" the present Top Ten Terrible Tyrants: at Number One, Hussein, "better known as the Butcher of Baghdad. He is stark, staring bonkers, and believes he is a reincarnation of Hitler"; Gaddafi ("guarded by girl commandos and believes Shakespeare was an Arab called Sheikh Speare") drops down to the Number Two spot; at Number Three, "Potty" Pol Pot... and on to Kim Il Sung, Manuel Noriega, Fidel Castro ...with blast from the past Idi Amin just scrapping in at Ten.

Hussein's credentials thus established, the *Sun* felt able to concentrate on details of war preparations (including a fascinating description of the marvellous rubber suit that will protect Our Boys from Hussein's chemical weapons; the only draw-back seems to be that "at temperatures above 70°F the suit can only be worn for up to an hour... the normal summer temperature in the Gulf area is between 110°F and 115°F").

Then there were other foreigners to be abused: the cowardly French, Germans, Italians and the Japanese; "All this talk about a great European ideal, of friends and allies bound to a common cause is so much codswallop... our only constant friends and reliable allies in the world are the Yanks", raged Friday's editorial.

By the end of last week, the front page headline was "OUR BOYS GO IN"; how long before the *Sun* is able to re-live its finest hour with "GOT-CHA"?



£1.20 plus 24p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

# 'Tribune' opposes the ban

The Labour left weekly *Tribune* (4 August) carried a front-page condemnation of the Labour Party NEC's ban on *Socialist Organiser*. However, the article, by Paul Anderson, presented a prejudiced and false picture of *SO*'s politics and what *SO* is. Sean Matgamna sent this response to *Tribune*.

**T**hanks for defending *Socialist Organiser's* right to remain in the Labour Party.

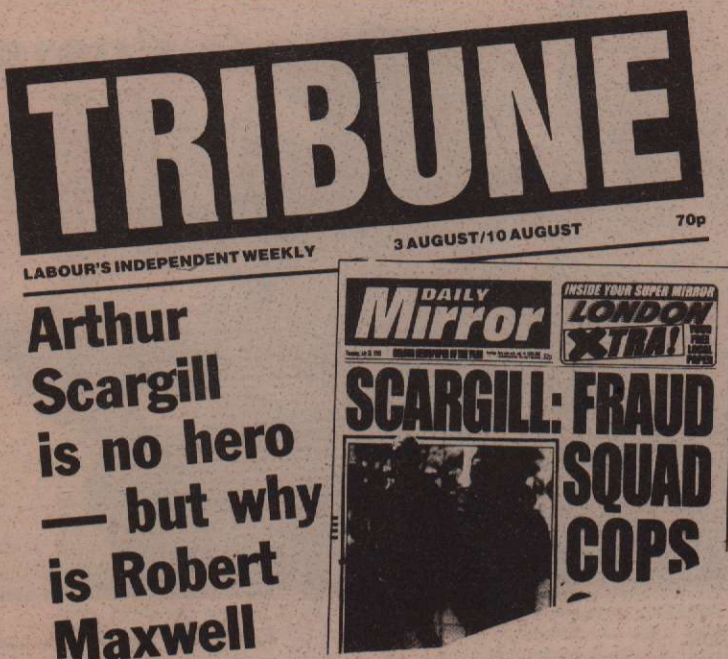
But Paul Anderson (*Tribune*, 4 August) evidently wrote with his teeth clenched, in defiance of his prejudices. That combined with his article's extreme compression to misrepresent both our politics and what we are. (Some of the history is wrong, too).

For sure, we give support to no nationalism. But we do support the Palestinian Arabs' claim to national rights in the West Bank/Gaza state demanded by the PLO, and we do support their *intifada*. We break with the conventional left not on that, but on the question of Israel's right to exist and defend itself.

We reject the left's demonisation of Israel and Zionism, and the comprehensive political hostility to most Jews alive today that goes with it. This "anti-imperialism of idiots" was until the recent eruption in Eastern Europe and the USSR the most vocal form of anti-semitism. Many neo-Trotskyists are infected with this specifically "left wing" form of anti-semitism, but there is nothing Trotskyist about it: it originates with Stalinism in the USSR after 1948, as articles in *SO* have proved.

Against the British state we support the Six Counties Catholics. We are in favour of a federal united Ireland (any other united Ireland is inconceivable: the Protestant community, too, has rights).

We are for Irish self-determination and British troops out. But we recognise that without a political settlement agreed by both Catholics and Protestants, troops out will trigger a *Protestant* drive for self-determination from Catholic Ireland, sectarian civil war and bloody repartition — not a



united Ireland and still less a socialist Ireland.

The root problem is the relationship to each other of the two sorts of Irish, made worse by British brutality and partition, which has created a second, artificial, minority in Ireland, the Six Counties Catholics.

When it carried some risk, or seemed to, I stood up for the Provisional IRA. The only socialist group raided by armed British police for many decades has been *Workers' Fight*, in which I had a hand, in 1973. But it is also



necessary to say what is in Ireland and what the Provisional IRA is: a communalist Catholic organisation, and not the socialist organisation some fantasise it is and others (hunting Irish votes in Britain) pretend it is. James Connolly would, I believe, have recognised neither the socialism nor the Republicanism of the Provisionals.

The common root to these positions is that we recognise that all peoples and fragments of peoples have rights, and we deny the view implicit in the prevalent left Zionist-and Protestant-bashing that there is such a thing as a bad people undeserving of collective rights. In that framework we do support the oppressed Catholics and the oppressed Palestinian Arabs.

Paul Anderson needlessly concedes the NEC case for banning *SO* — no, he endorses and reinforces it from the left — when he says that *SO* is a "Leninist sect"; "with its own rules and discipline", and then opposes the ban on the grounds that *SO* is so small it isn't necessary. We are, so to speak, a reptile, but only a little one. To which the NEC might reasonably reply: "So far".

Publicly available evidence, the files of our paper for example, shows that we are not organised as a one-faction "Leninist" sect. *SO* discipline? In what way do *SO*'s "discipline" and "rules" differ in kind from those of other Labour Party factions, including Kinnockite ones, the LCC for example — except that we are much less secretive and conspiratorial?

Paul Anderson notes that *SO* has changed its thinking about a number of questions. Those changes were not decreed by anyone, least of all by me. Both the Middle East and Ireland were openly discussed for years in the pages of *SO*. On the Middle East I was in the minority for five or six years, for most of it a minority of one. Perhaps I went to the wrong guru-school? Or perhaps the evidence in the paper of what *SO* is and how we function doesn't fit the "Leninist sect" model Paul Anderson is using?

We are certainly in, and committed to, the Lenin-Trotsky tradition (and we think the "Leninist sects" are not). Anderson does not understand the British sects and what makes them what they are: undemocratic one-faction groups with pre-designated leaders and unquestionable dogmas to defend, with the psychology of narrow persecuting religious cults.

The changes in *SO*'s politics, and the way we made them, publicly, are the proof that *SO* does not function as such a group. Anderson is too prejudiced, too busy buttressing the NEC "case" from the left, to notice.

By the way, the NEC ban has not rallied the support of the "other Trotskyists" to *SO*, as Paul Anderson expects. *Militant* and *Socialist Worker* have had big reports on the new witch-hunt, but have not mentioned the ban on *SO*, or protested against it, not even through clenched teeth.

"I do not see any justification for the NEC to ban *Socialist Organiser* and expel supporters of *Socialist Organiser*.

*Socialist Organiser* is a paper with a very wide and tolerant view. It seems to me this is one further example of what we said at the beginning of the witch-hunt: if you begin with one organisation, in the end you attack all of the left." Eric Heffer MP

"I want to express my solidarity with those comrades around the *Socialist Organiser* newspaper at this time when there are attempts to drive you out of the Labour Party. I do not agree with all the views put forward in *Socialist Organiser* but I recognise principled socialists when I see them. All of us on the left of the Labour Party and in fact all Labour members who want a democratic tolerant broad based Labour Party must unite to resist the expulsion of socialists from the Labour Party." Eddy Newman MEP

Israelis intend to do: It is an Arab problem and I don't think we should be involving ourselves.

We have cast off the Empire and those people that have picked the mantle up should be left to sort it out.

It's nice to see that the NUM President is going back on the campaign trail. Our branch at Manton has invited Scargill to address them and he's coming on the 25th of this month. He's got several meetings organised around the coalfield.

The message has to be got over to the membership that they must hear it from the man, and not from the *Mirror*.

I think it can only do good at this time, when we are facing decisions about a pay rise and possible industrial action.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, S. Yorkshire

# Big money trying to divide and conquer

## WHETTON'S WEEK A miner's diary

**S**traightaway, one tends to throw one's mind back to the Iran-Iraq war, when Ayatollah was the abomination and Britain must have supplied god knows what amount of arms and money to Saddam Hussein in order to fight Iran.

Now all of a sudden all those tanks have turned round. Now it's big American money trying to divide and conquer the Arabs. Many in the Western world know that in that corner of the globe they've got the west by the short and curlies.

If ever they decide to turn the taps off, they could destroy much of the western economy and they need to ensure that is never going to happen. So they have to defeat the Arabs and the only way to defeat them is to divide them.

They manipulated a conflict which suits them, insofar as it ensures that the Arabs do not sit down at the table, in order to control the price of oil and therefore affect the western economy.

I think that basically is what it's all about.

We get all the screaming from the gutter press and it's no help whatsoever to read it, because it's all hysteria.

I was amazed to see on television last night that the Libyan leader Gaddafi was quoted as saying that Iraq was made, but he was equally blaming the Iraqis and the Americans for their response.

He was the only one who was

talking sense. He has said that the original argument was madness, and the American response is madness. And as far as it goes that is quite right.

It seems to me that it is an Arab problem and the Arabs should sit down and discuss it. The US and Britain have set themselves up as some sort of international policeman. You can't think of a spot on the face of the globe where America doesn't send troops and ships and god knows what, and has a say in whether or not what is happening is legitimate or not.

To hear President Bush talk about resisting aggression, when you look at the aggression America has been carrying out in the last few years makes the mind boggle.

The Arabs should decide some policy that is going to protect their interests. Of course we have to wait yet for the real background, what Mossad is doing, and what the

# Troops out of the Gulf!

## EDITORIAL

**A**ugust 1990 may prove to have been a major turning point in world history — and not only because the following are all real and immediate possibilities:

- the devastation of Israel by Iraqi chemical weapons;
- Israeli nuclear bombs exploding in Iraq;
- massive destruction of the oil fields on a scale which plunges the world economy into its worst catastrophe for decades;
- and the driving out of the Palestinian Arabs from the West Bank as part of an Israel-Iraq war.

The USA, supported by the old imperial powers which controlled the various Arab states until the 1950s, has occupied part of Arabia, in a series of classic gun-boat imperialist moves. There is talk of an immediate US troop build-up to 250,000 men.

For now they land on the Arabian peninsula at the invitation of the government of Saudi Arabia, and with the agreement and token support of other Arab governments. But that may quickly change.

The area they are occupying is one of the most important places on earth, because its oil is essential to the US, European and Japanese economies. In the best scenario it is unlikely that the occupation forces will leave quickly. If their presence provokes active popular resistance — as it probably will — and undermines the position of the unpopular feudal rulers of Saudi Arabia who invited them in, then they will stay, despite popular resistance and maybe guerrilla warfare against them, or else abandon this economically vital area to conditions worse than those they have landed troops to repair.

They could find themselves in a sort of Vietnam war situation — and with vital immediate economic interests at stake, as they never were in Indochina. Whatever happens, it is very unlikely that this is just an episodic intervention like the US landings in Lebanon in 1958 and 1983, or the brief British reoccupation of Kuwait to face down a

threatened Iraqi invasion in 1961.

The US has acted in response to Iraq's seizure of Kuwait, under cover of a nearly unanimous United Nations vote to impose mandatory sanctions on Iraq.

It acts not to defend "democracy" — there was no democracy in Kuwait! — or to defend a small oppressed people — it has never done anything for the Kurds who have been massacred by successive Baghdad regimes for decades, or for the Palestinian Arabs demanding a state of their own where they are the big majority, in the West Bank and Gaza. The US has acted in its own direct economic self-interest, to stop the Iraqi state cornering anything up to 50 per cent of the world's oil reserves.

The US has been able to act with such decision, speed and determination because the USSR has collapsed into the chaos and uncertainties of perestroika and the attempt to reintroduce capitalism. The USSR's system of alliances — in which its ties with Iraq were important — has collapsed too, leaving a vacuum.

The US has been able to bound forward as it has done because it beat the USSR in the Cold War. The old-style US imperialist bragadocio is the first fruit of that victory and of the US rulers' new feeling of strength (combined with the vulnerability that has always been one of the midwives of such imperialist adventures).

Far from history having reached its end in a stable bourgeois world order, as the gloating bourgeois pundits have been claiming, we seem to have run into a time bend!

The impressive strength of the UN majority has essentially the same source — the collapse of the will of the rulers of the USSR and its allied states to oppose the US. Genuine horror at Saddam Hussein's aggression, and concern lest Iraq get into a position to have a stranglehold on the world economy, was part of it, but not the decisive part. Among those who joined the UN condemnation of the Iraqi takeover in Kuwait were some of the most vile and repressive governments on earth.

Last week, as the US troops were gathering strength in Saudi Arabia, details of the latest Chinese massacre in Tibet became known in the West. And that is just one ex-



ample.

Power politics, and the shift in the world balance in favour of the US, determined the UN vote. The US is already using it as a figleaf, as it used the freak UN vote on Korea in 1950 (the USSR had temporarily withdrawn, China was excluded) as a cover for its own great-power concerns. The American-British blockade of Iraq is already outside the terms of the UN resolution on sanction — though in fact the logic of sanctions is a blockade, and then war.

The UN's near-unanimity cannot last long, especially if it comes to war. No, we are not witnessing a first stage in the creation of an effective world government, but an accidental relation of forces which has allowed the US and its allies to use the authority of the UN to dress up their own interests.

When World War 2 ended the US emerged as the colossus of the capitalist world. It imposed its own "peace" and order on that world, a Pax Americana. It systematically worked to end the old British, French, Dutch and Belgian empire trading blocs. American hegemony, the old imperial powers' comparative decrepitude, and the unquenchable revolts of some of the colonial peoples, worked in the two decades after the war to dismantle the old capitalist empires.

The US intervention in Vietnam, with all its immense consequences, was not old-style colonial imperialism, but essentially a product of the competition of the US with the Stalinist empires.

The Pax Americana Mark 1, after 1945, saw the restructuring of the non-Stalinist part of the world under US hegemony on a basis reminiscent of the earlier period of 19th century British hegemony. The post-Cold-War Pax Americana Mark 2 for which Bush is now bidding is set to include an element, and an economically essential one, of old-style colonial imperialism. That is the logic of what is now happening in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

The US intervention in Saudi Arabia is more like 19th century colonialism than the "imperialism of free trade" which characterised the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates are not typical Third World states, and it is hard to imagine the US or any other power reimposing 19th century colonialism in other ex-colonial areas. But Arabia is an important area in and of itself. And another trend is relevant here.

The US is in relative decline. That decline unleashes a jousting for position among other capitalist big powers. The collapse of Stalinism intensifies that jousting.

Since at least the early '70s pressures have been growing towards protectionism and curbs on

trade. So far the big powers have resisted those pressures with considerable success — but how much longer? How much longer if the Gulf crisis sparks a new world slump? And, in a world of intensified competition, how will the other big powers react if the US corners the world's greatest oil stocks for itself? Won't they want their own colonial or semi-colonial preserves?

We do not and cannot know. We know the events in Saudi Arabia look like major new — and very old — developments in world politics.

None of the considerations above justify the invasion of Kuwait. The Saddam Hussein regime is among the most butcherous in the world. Already 10,000 Iraqi emigres living in Kuwait have been rounded up and sent back to Iraq for slaughter.

The Iraqi regime has been nourished by the West over the last decade, and built up to counter Iran. Without Western support Hussein would not have survived the failure of Iraqi hopes for a quick victory when he invaded Iran in 1980.

The US and the West built up Iraq as a sub-imperialist power to replace their subverted sub-imperialist client state in Iran after the Shah fell. Now the sub-imperialist wants to be a fully-fledged regional power. The erstwhile client and his backers have fallen out. *The present conflict is therefore between US imperialism (and British imperialism) and an ambitious sub-imperialism.* It is a quarrel between thieves.

But there is more to it. The Iraqi ruling class pursues Iraqi aggrandisement. Yet Saddam Hussein is now trying to appeal over the heads of the Arab governments to a common Arab nationalism.

He appeals not only against the foreign intruders, but also against the ultra-backward Arab feudal regimes in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. And all across the Arab world — and especially on the West Bank — there have been answering voices, sometimes thunderous.

If fighting breaks out, then more and more Arabs all across the jigsaw of Arab states will join those who see Saddam Hussein as the champion of a common Arab nationalism against both the foreigners and their Arab feudal allies. Hussein hopes to play the role that Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt played in the '50s, when he successfully defied British, French and Israeli invasion in response to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, and came to personify a pan-Arab national revolt against imperialism.

The Nasserists appealed to the general Arab belief that there is an Arab nation, and the yearning for the unity of that Arab nation. In fact there is the ethnic and cultural

raw material of an Arab nation, but not the essential economic knitting-together. Since the various old colonial units — from Syria to Morocco — have become independent, they have tended to go their own ways, paying only lip service to Arab unity.

Various attempts have been made to create unity between states — the most serious between Egypt and Syria in the '50s — but they have been short-lived.

The Arabs are like the Germans or Italians in the middle of the 19th century — split up into many states — though no-one can tell for sure what the direction of movement will be, towards unity or towards separate identities.

Nasserist pan-Arab nationalism tried to be secular and anti-imperialist, and to overthrow the old order of sheikhdoms and monarchies, artificially carved out and protected by British imperialism. It committed itself to the destruction of Israel.

Some of the old regimes were destroyed. But Nasserism failed. There was no Arab unity, no destruction of Israel, no general revolution against the feudalists.

The disappointment, in the '70s, of the mass enthusiasm for Arab nationalism of the Nasser sort, helped generate the vast reactionary wave of Muslim fundamentalism.

Saddam Hussein is trying to resurrect Nasser-style pan-Arab nationalism in the service of the Iraqi state, or anyway around it. He also appeals to the Muslim fundamentalists, thus creating a darker ideological mix than Nasserism ever was. Evidently Arab nationalism — like German or Italian nationalism in the last century — can have different forms.

Cynical, self-serving and demagogic as it is, Saddam Hussein's Nasserist posturing has immense implications for the US-British enterprise. His chances of survival are much less than Nasser's in 1956 (the US used its economic power to force Britain and France to give up). But his demagoguery can set the ground alight under the feet of the invaders in Saudi Arabia and maybe under the feet of their Arab allies.

The US invasion is likely to bring the roof down on the heads of some at least of its allies — and thus to make US withdrawal very difficult. However loathsome Saddam Hussein and his regime is, this is a strong reason why the Arabs should be left without foreign interference to sort out their own affairs. The aspiration to Arab unity is a legitimate aspiration, however we assess the chances of achieving it.

**Troops out of the Gulf!  
Iraq out of Kuwait!**  
For a socialist federation of the Middle East, with the right to self-determination of all minority nations! Including Israel!

## Iraq and Israel

**T**he hard left will naturally oppose the US occupation of Saudi Arabia. But many — the SWP for example — will go from that to positive support for Iraq.

And beyond that they will go on to uncritical cheerleading for Arab nationalism, especially if, as seems likely, there is a big upsurge of nationalist feeling.

It is already normal for large sections of the left to sport the most extreme of Arab chauvinist attitudes to Israel, calling for Israel's destruction long after the PLO has acknowledged Israel's right to exist. But any idea of Arab unity which does not include the rights of minorities — like the Jews and Kurds — to self-determination, is the vilest chauvinism.

Israel's right to exist must be

defended; so must the right of the Palestinian Arabs to a state in the West Bank and Gaza. The most telling of Saddam Hussein's demagogy has been the damning contrast he has pointed to between the West's concern for Kuwait and its lack of concern for the Palestinians. Of course, the Iraqi butcher does not add to this list the West's lack of concern about his own repression of the Kurds!

Widespread gas attacks that could devastate Israel are a serious possibility; so is an Israeli nuclear retaliation. The ultra-right in Israel could seize on a war to attempt to drive out the Palestinian Arabs from the West Bank.

All of this stems from the chronic antagonism between Israel and the Arabs. The only solution is Arab recognition of Israel, and Israeli acceptance of the Palestinian Arabs' right to their own state where they are the big majority, in the West Bank and Gaza.

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'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx  
Socialist Organiser  
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# Iraq out of Kuwait!

## Sanctions aren't the answer

By Tom Rigby

Many people who hate the hypocritical double standards displayed by Bush and Thatcher and who oppose military intervention against Iraq, are nevertheless looking to economic sanctions as a way of solving the Gulf crisis.

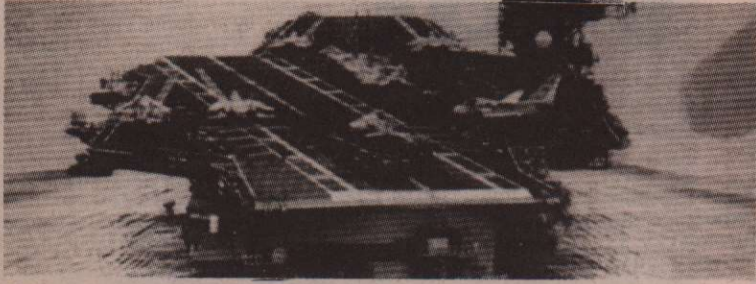
Tony Benn MP gives voice to that view in this week's *SO*.

Very often the impulse to support UN sanctions comes from the understandable desire to see that something is done to redress the injustice of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. But sanctions cannot be supported.

It is not possible in the current crisis to separate out military action and sanctions as two distinct and different options.

As we go to press (on Tuesday 14 August) the US and Britain are set to use military measures, the boarding of Iraqi tankers and other shipping to enforce economic sanctions. Such actions could quite quickly lead to military retaliation from Iraq.

In fact, part of the US's tactics in the Gulf are to corner Saddam — through sanctions and military encirclement — in the hope that he will lash out, thus presenting the US, Bri-



Sanctions are not an alternative to military action, but just another side of the same coin

tain and the allies with an excuse for full scale military intervention.

A unified, post cold war, United Nations sanctions campaign is not, in reality, an alternative to Thatcher, Bush and Mitterrand's gun boat diplomacy in defence of oil supplies.

The two are two sides of the same coin. Sanctions are not at all the peaceful solution that many imagine. Either they are futile gestures, or they imply the threat of military action to enforce them.

And even if it were possible to separate out sanctions from war, the human consequences of effective economic sanctions for the people of Iraq would be bad. Thatcher and Bush's sanctions are an attempt to starve the entire Iraqi people into submission, to make 18 million Iraqis pay

for the actions of Saddam's totalitarian regime.

How many people would have to die of starvation before Saddam capitulated? Is the 'new Hitler' going to roll over and die as soon as the first hunger marches and protests start in Iraq? Of course not.

Even if sanctions dislodged Saddam, any successor who came to power in circumstances controlled by the great powers is unlikely to care much for the interests of the Iraqi people, or to be much less rapacious than Saddam.

Genuine concern for the fate of the people of Kuwait must be separated out from Thatcher and Bush's drive to economically pulverise the people of Iraq. Like fire and water, imperialist sanctions and workers' solidarity do not mix.

## No to gunboat diplomacy!

By Tony Benn MP

The sanctions against Iraq, introduced unanimously by the United Nations Security Council, are likely to be effective in forcing Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, and should be maintained and tightened, by international action, to compel him to do so.

By contrast, the decision, taken by President Bush and supported by Britain, to send troops to Saudi Arabia, was motivated by his determination to defend United States oil supplies, and American forces will almost certainly stay there long after the immediate crisis has passed.

These parallel military operations have not been authorised by the Security Council and may well make the situation worse rather than better.

Certainly if the United States were to launch a pre-emptive military strike of any kind, or even to remain on a permanent basis, it could well unite the Arab world

against the West, and destroy the unity which has been achieved at the UN.

The Gulf crisis therefore faces us all with a choice between internationally agreed action, and national military expeditions, and, now that the Cold War is over, we have to decide what sort of a new world order we want to create.

It looks as if there are those, in NATO, who want to go back to the old imperialist days of "gunboat diplomacy" and "colonial wars" under which the rich industrial nations in the north used military force to gain control of the raw materials and the world markets to strengthen their own position.

The alternative is to strengthen the United Nations and use it actively to resist aggression, to campaign for democracy and human rights, and to divert resources from weapons to peaceful development.

This is why the war hysteria which is now being whipped up is so dangerous, and why we must try to use the present crisis to lay the foundation for a new international policy based upon the United Nations.

Tony Benn was speaking at a public meeting in Chesterfield on 13 August.

## Will there be a slump?

By Martin Thomas

Having seized Kuwait, Saddam Hussein now controls 20 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves.

If he should seize the rest of the oilfields of the Arabian peninsula — mostly on the eastern side of the peninsula, in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman — then his share will be 56 per cent. He will control more than half the world's total stock of one of its most basic industrial raw materials.

Further expansion or no, war or no, the price of oil is certain to rise sharply. The two previous sudden increases in the price of oil, in 1973 and in 1979-80, both triggered world slumps. Will it happen again?

Capitalist commentators say no. They cite three reasons:

- Although the Arabian peninsula has 56% of the world's oil reserves, it supplies only 20% of the world's current production. Since 1973, oil production has increased outside the oil states' cartel, OPEC — in the North Sea and in the USA, for example. OPEC now controls 45% of world

supply, as against 70% in 1973.

- This crisis comes after a long period in which oil prices have generally gone down. In 1973 oil prices went up from \$2 a barrel to \$12; in 1979-80, from \$13 to \$42. This time, the most pessimistic guess is an increase from \$20 to \$55 — drastic, but proportionately smaller than the previous rises, and ending in a price no higher relative to other goods than in 1980.

- Since 1973 the big capitalist powers have reduced their need for oil, equipping oil-fired power stations to use coal instead, for example.

All these are real factors. But the risk of slump remains real. There are huge unresolved imbalances in the world system which the oil price rise could suddenly make uncontainable. The stock market crash of October 1987 was caused by capitalist concern about the US's huge trade deficit. The system managed to weather that storm without a slump, and the trade deficit has been trimmed a little since then. But it remains extremely large.

Although America is a big oil producer, it is an even bigger consumer, importing 45% of its oil. An oil price rise will widen the deficit. At the same time the US government is wrestling with the huge 'Savings and Loans'

fiasco — the collapse of thousands of the US equivalents of building societies, a mess which will cost the government about \$500 billion to clear up. The strain on the government budget will cause further strain on the trade deficit.

America is already on the edge of a slowdown, and so is Britain. Japan and West Germany have been powering ahead. But Japan depends very heavily on oil imports from the Middle East. For West Germany, the oil price rise will mean a big increase in the cost of unifying with East Germany.

East Germany, like other East European states, has been sheltered from previous oil crises by relatively cheap oil, at relatively stable prices, from the USSR. That shelter is no longer available. Eastern Europe, already in economic difficulty, will be hit very hard indeed.

The doomsday scenario is the oil price rise unbalancing world markets so much that capitalists internationally lose confidence in the dollar, in which case the whole world trading system collapses. Even short of that, the next few months are likely to bring sharp reminders that the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe does not guarantee a rosy future for capitalism.



## Recall Parliament, says Eric Heffer

From front page

Iraq, however, was supported and bolstered, by western governments when it invaded and fought Iran. There is a great deal of hypocrisy being shown by the USA and by the Thatcher and Soviet governments.

The USA recently invaded Panama, in the process killing 7,000 people. It supported the Contras in Nicaragua. It has been involved in undermining governments and movements it dislikes in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America. It has supported dictatorships in many parts of the world, and has said little about Israeli policy in the Lebanon and Israel's refusal to accept that the Palestinian people have a right to their own state.

The Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan until recently, and is resisting the independence of people who were invaded and occupied in the early part of the 2nd World War. China has dominated and oc-

cupied Tibet for 30 years.

Two wrongs do not make a right. Clearly the US and Britain are concerned with their oil interests.

The issue cannot be democracy, because Kuwait had no real democracy, any more than most other countries in the area.

The danger is that the British people could find themselves in an imperialist war which is in the interests of neither the British, the Iraqi nor any other people, in the Arab countries or in the west.

The Arabs are basically one people, one nation, and the problem that has arisen in the Gulf can only, in the last analysis, be solved within that nation. The real solution must come from the peoples of the area.

Parliament should be recalled and the situation fully debated. In my view Labour should not automatically give the government its support in what it is doing. Many questions have to be asked, other solutions debated. United Nations decisions are one thing, the actions of the USA and British governments are another.

## Don't trust the UN!

The predecessor of the United Nations was the League of Nations, founded after the First World War, which essentially grouped together the various imperialist powers now prepared to put aside their differences and oppose Soviet Russia.

The United Nations, formed after the Second World War, was from the beginning a more all-inclusive body. Almost all the world's countries are members of it; exclusion has periodically been used as a symbol of global disapproval (China was excluded in favour of Taiwan for many years).

But within the UN, the most powerful imperialist countries have control, including the USSR, forming its Security Council. It is this which takes the important decisions: Security Council resolutions, which have to be agreed unanimously, have much greater force than general UN resolutions.

The UN has numerous subsidiary bodies — International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation etc — some of which periodically take more radical positions than the UN, and certainly than the Security Council, and aim to maintain standards of equality and 'decent behaviour'

within and between nations. But the UN as a whole is dominated by the super-powers, and acts according to their interests. Where their interests do not coincide, the UN does not act at all.

Thus on major questions of international dispute, the UN has been an ineffective body. Its resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict have been simply ignored, especially by Israel. Its intervention in Lebanon (an 'interim force' sent there in the 1970s) has been

utterly ineffectual.

If the imperialist powers cannot agree, the UN is useless. It has been called the 'Disunited Nations', which sums it up well.

The fact is that as the world is now, it is not able to unite the various antagonistic states on any lasting basis. The semblance of such unity presented by the UN doesn't mean much: its resolutions and decisions are not to be trusted or relied on.

## Kuwait

Population: about two million. 60 per cent of the population, and about 80 per cent of the workforce, are migrant workers — Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Thais, Koreans, Filipinos, Iranians, Afghans, Palestinians, other Arabs, Europeans. Only 60,000 people are 'first class citizens', entitled to vote, since women and people whose families have arrived in Kuwait since 1922 are excluded. This excludes, in particular, Palestinian families who arrived in Kuwait after 1948.

Economy: almost entirely based on

oil. But the Kuwaiti elite have systematically built up investments in the west, to a total of maybe \$100 billion. No-one need shed tears for that elite: they can live comfortably from those investments even if they never see another drop of oil again.

Origins: carved out of the Ottoman (Turkish) empire, under UK protection, in 1899. Oil production began in 1946. Britain granted independence in 1961, after sending troops to shore up Kuwait against claims made by Iraq after its 1958 revolution.

# Why Iraq went to war

By Clive Bradley

**Wars have sometimes been the midwives of revolution. But nothing much progressive is likely to come out of the escalating conflict in the Gulf.**

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait was a gamble, motivated by the deterioration of the Iraqi economy, and his regime's need to assert its regional dominance. It has fixed him into a political and military endgame that could have horrific consequences.

Saddam is not mad. So far, he has confounded Western observers by turning around what seemed a very unfavourable situation in the region. Initially, aside from Jordan, there seemed to be little support for Iraq in the Arab world. Long-time ally Egypt opposed Iraq in the sharpest terms. Now many Arab rulers are nervous of clear pro-Iraqi sentiment among their own populations.

Saddam has portrayed himself as the Gamal Abdul Nasser of the 1990s, and, it would seem, to great effect. He has linked the question of peace to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (and the Syrian occupation of part of Lebanon), a powerful emotional issue in the Arab and Muslim world.

Demonstrations in support of Saddam have occurred in several countries, most notably, and most alarmingly, among the Palestinians themselves. The dispatch of American troops, now planned to number a quarter of a million, has driven huge numbers of Arabs, for the moment at least, into his arms.

Instead of lining up against him, the Arab world has polarised. Very few Arab regimes are happy with appearing to be the ally of the US or, even worse, Israel. Even Syria,

which is ruled by a rival branch of the same party, the Ba'ath, which rules Iraq, may find that its current forthright anti-Iraqi stand is not tenable for very long.

The conflict shows all the signs of escalating into all-out war. There is little room for the parties involved to de-escalate it, least of all for Saddam himself. Iraq may invade Saudi Arabia, or America may invade Kuwait at least, possibly Iraq itself. As Saddam plays harder and harder on the role of Israel, and threatens more and more violent action

*"War became an effective indeed vital, mechanism for political control. The slogan of national unity became a way of terrorising people."*

against the "Zionist entity", Israel may be forced, or seize the opportunity, to launch an attack on Iraq. The stakes could be very high indeed.

The Iraqi action has "destabilised" the whole region, but in a way that leaves little scope for progressive, let alone socialist, possibilities. The regimes which will suffer most from angry populations, including maybe Saddam's own, stand to be replaced by political forces more inclined to the

Islamic fundamentalist kind of "anti-imperialism".

The pretext for Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was a dispute over oil prices. With that was combined an old Iraqi claim that Kuwait never deserved to be a separate country in the first place. But the reasons lie far deeper.

The immediate background is the highly militarised character of the Iraqi regime. Saddam survived eight years of war with Khomeini — a feat which most observers expected to be impossible — by transforming Iraqi society according to the necessities of wartime mobilisation. The war became an effective, indeed vital, mechanism for political control. The slogan of national unity became a means of terrorising the people.

By no means all Iraqis support the regime. Very large parts of the population are more or less unanimously opposed to it — specifically the Kurds, who make up about a third of the population. They have suffered appallingly under Saddam's regime. Their villages have been nerve-gassed, and Kurdish areas have been "Arabised" (that is, had the Kurds forcibly moved out of them). The Shi'ite Muslims, who according to some estimates are a majority in Iraq, also oppose Saddam.

The Ba'ath party has been able to suppress this opposition through an extensive machinery of terror. About a million people, out of a population of fifteen million, are members of the party, which functions like a typical "Stalinist", totalitarian, state-party. Ba'athist Iraq is the Middle East's first totalitarian society, achieving a degree of control only dreamed of by "socialist" dictators in the 'sixties.

Opposition, though widespread, has been crushed. Enough people have a stake in the regime to terrorise those who are against it. And the war became the medium through which the Ba'athists' totalitarian monopoly on political life was achieved.

The regime learned to put war mobilisation to its own use. War had its drawbacks, especially the money it cost; but the Ba'athists have found no substitute for its political role. Thus Saddam has spent the last six months or so threatening war with Israel; now he has invaded Kuwait and declared effective war on the United States instead.

This move ties in with the regime's long-term regional ambitions. The attack on Iran in September 1980, judged to be at a moment when that longstanding rival would be too weak to resist (since the Khomeini regime had still barely consolidated after the 1979 Revolution) was intended to establish Iraq as the dominant power in the Gulf and the Arab world.

Saddam wanted to be the new Nasser, the modern-day equivalent of the man who after the Suez crisis of 1956 made Egypt the centre of the Arab world politically and militarily. Egypt lost that position

in the 'seventies, partly because of the severe effects of unresolved war with Israel (which forced Egypt to sign a peace treaty in 1979), and partly because of the rise of oil states after 1973.

Despite their awesome financial power, none of the oil states had or has the military clout to take Egypt's place, most of them being sparsely populated and socially backward. Iraq, through its geopolitical position, could hope to fill the gap; and, unlike Egypt, it is itself an oil-rich state.

Iraq's failure to beat Iran put paid to those ambitions. Most commentators believed that Saddam was finished. But he rode the tide, survived, and now is trying again.

Iraq, however, is in a weak position economically. It borrowed huge amounts of cash from the Gulf states to finance the war with Iran, and with oil prices low it has not been able to pay off the loans and restore its economy. Thus Saddam's ambitions are given urgency and even desperation. It might be now or never.

The disarray of the Arab world gives further force to those ambitions. The last wave of Arab nationalism, in the 1950s and early '60s, dominated by Nasser, promised immense economic advances and a military settlement of the Palestinian questions. But the nationalists failed. They failed on every account.

Aside from the oil states, their economies sank deeper and deeper into stagnation, and Israel proved too powerful a nut to crack. So the leading nationalists of the '50s, the Egyptians, retreated both from their anti-Israel rhetoric, and their anti-Americanism; indeed, Egypt became one of the United States's firmest friends in the region.

A few states kept up the rhetoric, especially Syria and Libya, although it has proved over and over again to be just rhetoric. For the rest, there was a long-term drift towards a negotiated solution of the Palestinian conflict.

With the initial success of the *intifada*, the PLO, which had been torn by disputes concerning the relative weight to be given to diplomacy and armed struggle, united behind a diplomatic offensive aimed at getting US support for a "two states" solution.

All that diplomacy has come to nothing in the face of Israeli intransigence. The headway the PLO seemed to be making with the US came to nothing, too. Across the Arab world there is the feeling that they have been wasting their time, and the only possible solution lies in force of arms.

If Palestinian kids with stones can fight the Israelis, why not the regular Arab armies? Those armies, especially the Egyptian and Iraqi ones, are enormous. Iraq has about a million men bearing arms.

As old-fashioned secular nationalism has bashed its head on the rocks of Israeli military superiority and political belligerence, Islamic fundamentalism has grown stronger and stronger. In most Arab countries,



Oil. The Gulf has two thirds of the world's supply



Legless veteran of the Iran/Iraq

and in non-Arab Iran too, fundamentalists are a formidable force.

They are the single largest opposition in the Egyptian parliament. In Syria, the government has to lay siege to one of its own cities, Hama, in 1983, to quell a fundamentalist uprising. In Saudi Arabia, as early as 1979, fundamentalists rocked the regime. Among the Palestinians, they are stronger than ever before, particularly in Gaza. In Lebanon, they achieve what the broadly secular Lebanese national movement could not, and forced Israel to withdraw. And in Iraq itself the Shi'ites probably ten

# Troops out of the Gulf

# Saddam's road to power

**Clive Bradley outlines the political history of Iraq**

**S**addam Hussein's regime is the product of a long history of political struggle in Iraq.

More than in any other Arab country, the working class played a vital role, at least in the early stages of those struggles. And the Ba'athist regime is in power because of the defeat of the workers' movement in 1963.

Iraq fell under British control after World War 1. After the Second World War, it was ruled by a pro-British monarchy which oppressed its people brutally. The monarchy was overthrown by the army in 1958, in one of the great moments of the Arab Revolution.

All across the Arab world, degenerate puppet regimes, installed by and allied to the British and French empires, were falling. In Egypt, the military regime of Nasser embarked upon a radical anti-imperialist policy that was to lead to the nationalisation of almost all Egyptian industry. The regime even declared itself socialist. (It was nothing of the sort, but it was an attempt to break the grip of imperialism.)

The Iraqi regime led by Kassem after 1958 was another of this type. Kassem seized control of the huge Iraqi oilfields, which were owned by a British company (although the oil industry itself was not nationalised until 1972).

Although Kassem came to power through a military coup, in the years after 1958 the government was far from having the total dictatorial control over Iraq that Saddam has now. Various political forces struggled for control. Kassem represented one wing of the nationalist movement, the Ba'ath party another.

Ba'ath means "resurrection", and in its full title the Ba'athist party is "socialist". Founded after World War 2, it was the first serious attempt to form a genuinely pan-

Arab nationalist party, and for a while, until the conflicts between its Syrian and Iraqi branches tore it apart, it did function on a pan-Arab basis.

In 1958 the Ba'ath's main base was not in Iraq but in Syria. Kassem's nationalism was more Iraqi particularist. Kassem depended for support on the Communist Party, which was the strongest political party in Iraq at the time.

The Communists had built a powerful base of support among Iraqi workers, particularly in the rail industry, in the northern oilfields (where there was an ethnic mix, with large Kurdish and other groups), and in the southern port of Basra.

But the CP chose not to mobilise the working class on an independent basis, against all sections of Iraqi capital; instead it unreservedly supported Kassem, describing him as the "sole leader" of the country (a slogan intended to mean that Nasser could not take over Iraq, as he had effectively taken over Syria for a period in the late 'fifties).

Between 1959, when the CP was at its peak, and 1963, there was a great deal of bloodletting. Some of the political disputes were in reality a thin excuse for savage ethnic hostilities.

Then in 1963 the Ba'ath moved against Kassem, overthrowing him in a coup which was apparently supported by the British Iraq Petroleum Company and the CIA, and drowning his supporters in blood.

The Ba'ath regime proved short-lived, as some of their stronger military allies, led by Arif, turned on them. But by 1968 the Ba'ath were strong enough to organise a further coup, which brought Saddam Hussein to power.

Saddam's faction of the Ba'ath was more "right wing" than the faction which took power in 1963, and more resolutely hostile to the Syrian branch. The break between the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath dates from the mid-sixties.

Like all his predecessors, Saddam continued a policy of repression of the Kurds, at times almost genocidal. The CP, which for a time in the early 'seventies went as far as to join the Ba'ath government — before Saddam fell out with them — supported this policy.



war passes mural of Saddam

towards fundamentalism.

Saddam has carefully addressed himself to a Muslim, and not simply an Arab, constituency, in calling for support against the US and Israel. He has talked of "Holy War", and made every effort to appeal to Islamic sentiment.

And that is the way the wind is blowing. Immediate US strategy would seem to be for economic blockade and gunboat diplomacy to destabilise Saddam, allowing internal forces to overthrow him. But who? Pro-American factions of the Ba'ath party certainly exist: Saddam himself was the US's regional

buddy in the closing stages of the Gulf War.

But American intervention will enormously weaken those factions. If Saddam fails to stand up to the Americans, then those who will gain most are the hard-line "anti-imperialists", including the fundamentalists. That is the problem the West has had in Iran: the "sensible" factions of the Islamic Republic are repeatedly unable to restrain the more extreme groups, and periodically have to retreat before them.

Therefore, having set the anti-American, anti-Zionist ball rolling,

Saddam himself cannot afford to back down. Retreat would be suicidal, unless the Americans had the good sense to allow him to appear to have scored a victory in their current frame of mind they would clearly have no intention of doing.

The scene is set for intensification of the conflict. Every party to it has a short-term interest in escalation: Saddam, because he is staking his regime on its ability to stand up against imperialism, the Great Satan (and the Jews); the United States, and their Western allies like Britain, because they have pro-

nounced Saddam to be the new Hitler and reminded us over and over again that appeasement didn't work; and Israel.

Iraq's bellicose propaganda has always been useful for the current right-wing government in Israel. The more the Arabs beat the war drums, especially if they are threatening to mustard-gas Tel-Aviv, the more convincing do the Israeli people find the argument about hanging on to the West Bank for security reasons. The right, who think the West Bank belongs to them anyway, can use that as an excuse.

Yitzhak Shamir could seize the

opportunity to launch a first strike at Iraq. Already his government is saying that their predecessors' destruction of an Iraqi nuclear plant has now been vindicated: after all, suppose Saddam now had nuclear weapons?

An Israeli attack might serve Shamir well, enabling him to portray himself as the man who really stood up to Arab aggression. On the other hand, it could plunge the whole region into a war on a scale that would dwarf all previous Arab-Israeli wars. Both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs would probably suffer hugely.

# If! Iraq out of Kuwait!

# When the UN wrecked Korea

By Gerry Bates

The last time the US intervened in force with the backing of the United Nations was in Korea in 1950-53.

Korea was partitioned at the end of World War 2. USSR forces took the North, and ceded power to the Stalinist-led guerrilla forces which had long fought against Japan's colonial rule in Korea. The US occupied the South, and installed Syngman Rhee, a right-wing Korean nationalist who had opposed the Japanese from the safety of Hawaii.

The North became a Stalinist dictatorship, but the Southern regime was scarcely less repressive, and also less popular. The Southern government outlawed the Communist Party and all CP-led organisations in 1948. Rigid government control was exercised over the remaining non-Stalinist trade unions.

Most of the US troops withdrew from the South by June 1948, and the rest by early 1950. All USSR troops had withdrawn from the North by December 1948.

The Southern regime was corrupt, vicious and unpopular. The US refused to promise to defend it militarily. The Stalinist-nationalists seized their chance.

On 25 June 1950 North Korea invaded the South. The corrupt regime in the South had little power of resistance. As an American liberal writer reports:

"The invaders' Russian tanks could easily have been stopped in the hills by a resolute defence... But millions of south Koreans welcomed the prospect of unification, even on Communist terms.

They had suffered police brutality, intellectual repression and political purges. Few felt much incentive to fight for profiteers or to die for Syngman Rhee. Only 10 per cent of the Seoul population abandoned the city; many troops deserted..."

If Korea's future had been decided by the people of Korea, Korea would have been reunified then and there. The USSR was not involved, beyond supplying the North Koreans (meagrely) with weapons.

The US was alarmed. It moved troops to South Korea as fast as it could, and pushed the United Nations into backing it. It could do

that because the USSR was boycotting the UN at the time.

The US-UN forces first held the south-east corner of Korea, then landed at Inchon, near Seoul. With their huge firepower, they soon drove the North Koreans back to the 38th Parallel, the pre-war dividing line.

Then on 24 November 1950, the American commander, Douglas MacArthur, acting on his own decision, launched a huge offensive

'General O'Donnell demanded that the US use the atom bomb against the Chinese. MacArthur wanted the conflict to be carried into Manchuria.'

towards the Yalu river, the natural frontier between China and Korea. MacArthur's intention, as he himself later confirmed, was to prevent a peace settlement, to provoke China into entering the war, and to lead the US forces into China, where he hoped they would overthrow the new revolutionary Stalinist regime.

Two days later the Chinese armies crossed the Yalu. MacArthur had overreached himself.

The US-UN armies were decimated by the Chinese assault. As they retreated southwards, they adopted a scorched-earth policy. Crops and homes were destroyed. Millions of Koreans were left homeless and hungry. Whole towns were laid flat by bombing. By the end the war was to claim four million military and one million civilian deaths.

General O'Donnell demanded that the US use the atom bomb against the Chinese. "They'll understand the lash when it is put to them". MacArthur wanted the conflict to be carried into Manchuria (the part of China nearest Korea).

Their masters in Washington refused to go that far. The Chinese halted about 70 miles south of the 38th Parallel; fighting continued at a lower level until finally a truce was signed re-establishing the border at the 38th Parallel.

From top to bottom Korea was devastated. The economy was wrecked.

Rhee, restored to power in the South, continued his policies of repression. His police state seized any publication even mildly critical of the regime. It was not until 1960, after a wave of popular unrest, that Rhee was forced to step down.

A US-backed military junta replaced him. With huge US aid and military contracts from the Vietnam war, South Korea's "economic miracle" began. But it was still a regime of police-state repression and the most extreme exploitation.

Not since the Vietnam war has the US sent such military forces into action abroad as it now talks of using in the Gulf. Belinda Weaver looks back at what the US's "defence of freedom" meant in Vietnam.

Ap Bac, Ia Drang, the Tet Offensive, Khe Sanh, the siege of Hue: the names evoke the decisive battles of the Vietnam war.

If they resonate for us, how much more must they resonate for the Vietnamese, who lost countless thousands of lives in those battles, and up to a million dead before America finally withdrew.

Before World War 2 Vietnam had been ruled by the French. After the war, the Viet Minh was formed by Ho Chi Minh and others to free Vietnam from French domination. It took nine years of war, from 1945 to 1954, to drive out the French.

In 1954 the French — and the Americans, who were increasingly taking over the role of the big power in Vietnam — were still strong enough to keep hold of half of Vietnam. The North was ceded to Ho Chi Minh's Stalinist-nationalists. In the South the US installed Ngo Dinh Diem, who fast proved unpopular.

Guerrillas in the south began to organise, and declared war on Diem's regime in 1957. To discredit the southern guerrillas, the US deemed them communist infiltrators from the North, but the National Liberation Front (named Viet Cong by the Americans) were southerners. Many were former Viet Minh. By 1961, they had grown so strong that President Kennedy had to commit US arms to prevent Diem from falling.

The first American military came as "advisers" in the early '60s. There were several thousand of them, and some died at the hands of the guerrillas, but that was kept quiet in the US. It was policy not to grant medals or decorations to "advisers" who died in Vietnam, even for acts of extreme bravery.

This early, "advisory", stage of the war gets lengthy coverage in Neil Sheehan's big war history, *A Bright Shining Lie*, recently published in paperback.

Sheehan traces the evolution of the war and US strategy through the career of John Vann, a military adviser in the Mekong Delta in 1962, who left the army and yet later commanded troops as a civilian general in the Central Highlands, near Pleiku and Kontum, in the closing stages of the war.

Vann was a maverick, at odds with the military establishment. He believed the war could be won only if the US took direct political control in South Vietnam, pushed aside people like Diem, and coupled the war with social reform.

The generals instead believed in a "war of attrition" — throwing more and more firepower at the NLF until they gave up. Their strategy reduced whole areas of Vietnam to waste and ruin without achieving any success for the Americans.

Vann was singular in trying to think like the men in Hanoi, trying to grasp the essentials of guerrilla war in jungle terrain against a peasant army who were almost indistinguishable from the rest of the population. The generals, on the other hand, believed that their firepower was invincible.

Vann (and Sheehan too, who was a journalist in Vietnam at the time,

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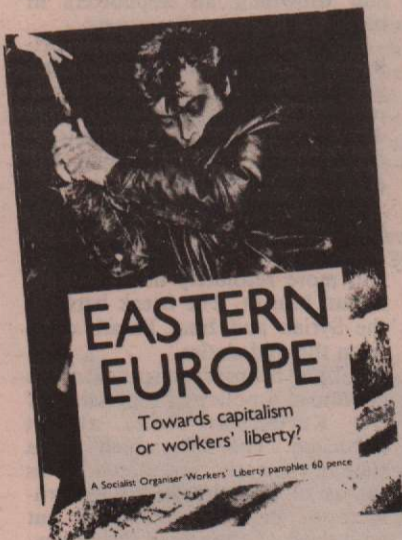
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Peace-keeping UN style





# What US imperialism meant in Vietnam

and admired Vann) deplored the US military's extreme ignorance of Vietnamese history. Even a cursory study should have shown the US war planners that Vietnam was a tough nut to crack, a country that had beaten the militarily superior French by careful tactics and strategy.

The guerrillas' decision to fight to the end was made before the Americans arrived, and they stuck to it right despite appalling losses, despite the B52 bombing raids that so terrorised their soldiers that many committed suicide, and despite the napalm. The Vietnamese were armed with something the Americans lacked — a cause they believed in. Their commitment to the cause of national self-determination was a crucial weapon, perhaps the most crucial weapon they had. They were prepared to accept one of the greatest losses of life in wartime, in relation to population, of any modern country, rather than surrender.

The bombs, the napalm, and the land mines killed many, many Vietnamese, but they only reinforced the Vietnamese will to fight. Every bomb dropped made recruits for the "Viet Cong".

The North Vietnamese Army, the NVA, only came in to the war in 1965, when US troop numbers in Vietnam began to build up towards half a million and the US started bombing North Vietnam. The "Viet Cong" recruited from and lived off the peasantry in the areas they controlled.

They could survive in no other way. They could get large supplies of arms only by capturing them

from the enemy. In that the "Viet Cong" were spectacularly successful.

When Vann arrived in the Mekong Delta in 1962, the guer-

*"The basic American strategy in Vietnam never altered from one of attrition. All manner of firepower — bombing, napalm, defoliants, bullets, grenades, shells — was unleashed on Vietnam".*

rillas were very poorly armed. Mortars and machine guns were few, and they had no weapons against helicopters or aircraft or armoured

personnel carriers.

But the US had been arming Diem's forces since 1962. The guerrillas got their arms by overrunning the outposts of Diem's army.

Despite all the "advice" of the Americans, Diem's army was unable to deal with the NLF. The real role of the army (ARVN) was to keep Diem in power. Diem did not want to risk losing his army supporters in battle. Army commanders were instructed to stay out of trouble, to avoid engagements, and above all to avoid casualties.

Diem wanted a war that looked good on paper, so commanders began faking operations. To keep "body counts" high, they used indiscriminate aerial bombing raids, wiping out whole villages.

Vann opposed those attacks for pragmatic reasons: he believed that they alienated the civilian population from the South Vietnamese regime, and drove them into the arms of the "Viet Cong". But the South Vietnamese commanders swore the villagers were "Viet Cong" sympathisers, and the American military believed them.

By the time of the watershed battle of Ap Bac, in 1963, Vann had realised two things. The ARVN would not fight, and the "Viet Cong" were overcoming their fear of American firepower. They were learning to stand and fight.

With incredible courage, the "Viet Cong" had learned how to withstand their fear of the death-dealing helicopters and armoured personnel carriers. With rifles alone, they shot down three helicopters at Ap Bac, and prevented others from landing. A lone "Viet Cong" commander

stood up against the terrifying armoured personnel carriers, throwing grenades at the beasts, while his men shot round after round in support.

The gesture seemed futile: the APCs were invulnerable to grenade and bullet. But the ARVN troops in the APCs panicked against an enemy so determined. They withdrew in confusion.

Vann concluded that the only answer was to deny the "Viet Cong" the protection of the peasants who sheltered them, by winning over the peasants politically. Perhaps aid could achieve what bullets could not.

The peasants were at the mercy of poor harvests and disease. American aid could provide drilled wells for clean, safe water; build latrines on solid ground; erect medical dispensaries and schools; provide seed, chemical fertiliser, and fatter pigs.

Millions of dollars were spent. But they ended up in the hands of local officials, who practised corruption on a huge scale. Military strategy also wrecked the pacification efforts. Bombing raids terrorised and killed peasants, making many refugees. Others were herded into "strategic hamlets", barbed-wire camps where their lot was miserable. The US failed to win any hearts and minds.

The basic American strategy in Vietnam never altered from one of attrition. All manner of firepower — bombs, napalm, defoliants, bullets, grenades, shells — was unleashed on Vietnam. The "Viet Cong" constructed a network of deep tunnels, with underground schools, hospitals and living

quarters out of reach of the bombs.

In his book *Dispatches* Michael Herr describes the wilful blindness of many of the American military to the failure of the attrition strategy. He reports:

"I met an information officer ... who showed me on his map and then from his chopper what they'd done to the Ho Bo Woods, the vanished Ho Bo Woods, taken off by giant Rome ploughs and chemicals and long, slow fire, wasting hundreds of acres of cultivated plantation and wild forest alike, 'denying the enemy valuable resources and cover'.

It had been part of his job for nearly a year now to tell people about that operation... and he still couldn't get over it. It seemed to be keeping him young... it really showed what you could do if you had the know-how and the hardware.

And if in the months following that operation, incidences of enemy activity in the larger area of War Zone C increased 'significantly', and American losses had doubled and then doubled again, none of it was happening in any damn Ho Bo Woods, you'd better believe it..."

Demoralisation set in among the American troops. As men saw their buddies blown away, as they experienced the hatred and contempt of the Vietnamese they had thought they were there to help, as the death toll and the defeats stacked up, drugs and alcohol became increasingly popular as a means of escape from the terror of the war. The US soldiers had no cause in Vietnam, they had no ideology to stiffen their morale.

In early 1973, after a final huge US bombing blitz against North Vietnam around Christmas 1972, a peace agreement was signed, and most of the Americans withdrew. Two years later, in June 1975, the North Vietnamese and the NLF made a final push, and the last Americans fled.

They left a wrecked country behind them. The US had never been fundamentally interested in the welfare of the Vietnamese people, but only in the importance of Vietnam as a "domino" in world power politics. To pursue their power politics, they allied with a corrupt, parasitic, and unpopular ruling class in South Vietnam, and that alliance made any talk of freedom and social reform under US auspices pure hypocrisy.

Vietnam today is not a democratic country. It has a Stalinist regime, and its people for the most part live in poverty.

That misery is not only the regime's fault. The US blockade of Vietnam has crippled the country economically. War damage, which made two million homeless and wasted and poisoned huge areas of Vietnam, has never been paid for by the US.

And the low standard of living and the Stalinist nature of the regime do not mean that the American intervention was right or justified. It was a naked aggression against the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination.

America hoped to maintain a client government in South Vietnam, a government it would prop up with money and guns in return for favours. The Vietnamese were right to drive them out. The US wrecked their homeland and murdered their people, and still refuses to pay its share of the bill.

The Americans have been mean in defeat, wanting to deny the Vietnamese not only restitution and aid, but also their incredible victory. At the end of the war, an American colonel remarked to his Vietnamese counterpart: "You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield".

"That may be so", the Vietnamese replied. "But it is also irrelevant".



The mutants fight back

## A socialist message under the blood and gore

### FILM

**Belinda Weaver**  
reviews 'Total Recall'

**A**rnold Schwarzenegger is an unlikely socialist propagandist, but his latest movie, *Total Recall*, is a socialist allegory.

Sound unlikely? See it for yourself.

You'll need a strong stomach. The blood is very red and it explodes right in your face. You lose count of the corpses. There's even more bone-crunching, ball-crushing, neck-breaking, eye-gouging, kick-boxing punishment than in last year's *Die Hard*. Anyone can die at any time, barring the main characters of course.

Yet *Total Recall* is not just a kill-or-be-killed bonanza.

The plot, drawn from a story by Philip K Dick, centres round Douglas Quaid (Schwarzenegger), a

married construction worker whose sleep is troubled by vivid nightmares of trouble on Mars. Mars absorbs his waking thoughts too, particularly as the news reports increasingly cover rebel activity against Mars mine-owner Coahaagen. So obsessed does Quaid become that he goes to ReCall, a company specialising in memory implants, hoping to acquire a Mars experience.

But things go horribly wrong. Under sedation, Quaid's genuine memories of Mars, erased by the nameless and sinister 'Agency', return. He doesn't quite know what he's forgotten, but

Cohaagen's men are on his trail and out to kill. His only chance is to get back to Mars and find out the truth.

On Mars, the rebels are a mass of mine workers and their allies, the mutants, who are fighting for access to air, a resource controlled by Coahaagen. He's shown as a cold, calculating capitalist, cornering the air market and jacking up the price as a way of forcing people into slavish dependence. The rebels believe the air should belong to everybody, and Quaid joins their fight.

The film contrasts the mutants' struggle with Coahaagen's contempt for human life; when the mutants displease him, he instructs his minions to kill them all.

The film also keeps us guessing. Quaid is in the dark for most of the time, unsure what is real and what is not, and so are we.

The memory erasure and implants Quaid undergoes are a metaphor for the false consciousness he has to fight before he can see where right and justice lie.

Unusually, women in the film get a fair share of the action. Instead of

screaming on the sidelines while Quaid slugs it out, the women wade in, giving as good as they get in the punching/kicking stakes. One woman even takes on Quaid, and acquits herself well.

The violence in the movie is a nuisance. When you've got a real story, you don't need the special effects and the buckets of blood, and when blows that should have felled an ox make no impression, when people don't even look bruised after heavyweight bouts, the movie looks cartoonish and silly.

For all that, *Total Recall* has something to say. For once, the mutants and the workers are the good guys. Resources should be shared, not used to keep people subject. People have to struggle against the false ideas society tries to implant in them.

It still seems unlikely that Schwarzenegger, ardent Republican and national fitness adviser to George Bush, made this film. Is Arnie a secret socialist mole, burrowing away within the Republican party, or did someone steal his mind while he signed the contract?

## Australian Labour goes for cuts and sell-offs

### LETTERS

**A**ustralian Labor Party (ALP) governments are in crisis. In Victoria, one financial debacle follows another — the collapse of the

**Pyramid Building Society (200,000 depositors) being the latest.**

Anger has been directed at the State Labor government rather than the owners or the banks. The right-wing opposition parties in Victoria are doing nothing. They figure they have already won the next election, although some of their members want them to block supply and bring

ing the government to an early election.

There is a billion dollar hole in the State ALP government's budget (due next month), and desperation is leading to proposals to sell off state utilities (gas and fuel), drastically cut services, and raise taxes. Health workers marched on the State Parliament warning against cuts.

From the federal ALP government, the push is on to sell the airlines and to deregulate Telecom. Beazley, the minister responsible, wants an amalgamated Telecom and OTC, with AUSSAT to be sold as the basis for network competition. Federal treasurer (finance minister) Paul Keating wants OTC to form a joint venture with private interests. Both proposals are pretty stupid, even from a capitalist perspective. There is a clear natural monopoly in the network carrier. UK and US experience shows that while big business makes some gains from privatisation and competition, the depleted infrastructure brings great costs.

Anyway, my union (the telecom engineers') is making a lot of noise, and has threatened industrial action. The State officials seem quite serious about it too. We had a mass meeting last week.

**Paul Boardman,**  
Doncaster.

**Richard Lane,**  
Melbourne, Australia.

## Why won't the SWP debate?

**I** am alarmed by the increasingly anti-democratic practices of the Socialist Workers' Party.

Supporters of other groups are barred from their meetings and events, or left forlornly waving their hands as the chair crassly ignores their right to speak.

Less than a month before Neil Kinnock banned *Socialist Organiser* from the Labour Party, the SWP had expelled *SO* supporters from "Marxism '90". I have even seen young, or new, SWP members told by their "seniors" not to buy the publications of other groups or to talk to their members!

They refuse resolutely every challenge to debate with other left groups, arrogantly pretending that theirs are the only socialist ideas and that everyone else is "irrelevant". Studiedly avoiding clear and comradely debate, their political discourse with groups such as *Socialist Organiser* is confined to one-sided rants. If you are not the sort of person who practises that aggressive, confrontational style, and try in vain to

get a word in edgeways, then tough — you are waved aside in self-satisfied triumph.

Many who come across the SWP are put off socialist ideas, while those who join are trained in narrow-mindedness, dogma and sectarianism.

The SWP would do well to study the way in which Stalin destroyed the Bolshevik Party, before they suffer a similar fate themselves. And they should heed warnings about "substitutionism" before they convince themselves that they are the labour movement, and that socialism will be created by the SWP alone.

I find it genuinely frightening that one of the largest avowedly Marxist organisations in Britain is stifling ideas and democracy in this way. It is potentially very damaging to the left, and to the prospects for socialism. They are pulling socialists out of the labour movement just when it needs them most.

**Janine Booth,**  
Islington.

## No tears for Gow

**I** find it hard to sympathise and agree with the Tory government that the death of Ian Gow was somehow tragic.

Ian Gow was a very strong supporter of Thatcherite policies which promoted unemployment, poverty, homelessness, and cuts in the NHS which led to men, women and children suffering and dying because they could not get the treatment they required — treatment, I might add, that they had long since paid for through their taxes.

Many people can look over eleven years of Tory rule, and see a sweeping tide of oppression. That

oppression has come in many forms, from anti-trade-union legislation, through a massive cut in social and community spending, to a police force that can hardly spell justice, never mind implement it.

And those are just some of the policies Tory MP Ian Gow supported, policies of injustice and greed, policies that, as a socialist, I am fundamentally opposed to.

Many people may now feel a little justice has returned to the scene of the crime, and we can walk the streets possibly feeling that bit safer.

# Back to the future with Norman, Alan and John

## INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**A** simple soul like me finds it difficult to predict the impact of Saddam Hussein on the next British general election.

Has he done Mrs Thatcher a big favour, handing her a heaven-sent opportunity to demonstrate the need for resolute leadership and a tooled-up 'defence' capability; or will he send oil prices and inflation rocketing, thus sabotaging John Major's pre-election economic miracle?

Either way, the Gulf crisis can only confirm the strategists at both Walworth Road and Congress House in their view that a crucial factor at the

next election will be the public's perception of Labour's ability to run the economy 'responsibly', hold down inflation better than the Tories and keep union militancy in check.

In this context, it may be a coincidence that two documents, 'A New Agenda' and 'Managing the Economy: Towards 2000' appeared just as Hussein was barging into Kuwait. But it was not a co-incidence that both these snappily-titled pamphlets have come out in the run-up to this year's TUC Congress and that both propose virtually the same solutions to Britain's economic ills: words like 'partnership', 'consensus'; and even 'tripartite' abound.

To those of us who remember the '70s and the glorious Wilson/Callaghan administrations, talk of a 'National Economic Assessment', a 'National Wages Accord' and a 'National Economic Development Office' will also sound very familiar. We've been here before, haven't we? Only last time they called it the 'Social Contract'.

These exciting new proposals come to you courtesy of the TUC economic

committee ('Towards 2000') and the dynamic duo of John Edwards and Alan Tuffin ('New Agenda'). Both pamphlets are full of the usual guff about the need for better training, 'investment in people', R and D, joining the ERM and all the other standard catch-phrases of 'modern' trade unionism. But at the heart of both lies the idea of pay negotiations being determined by 'a public discussion between the government, CBI and TUC of Britain's economic prospects' ('New Agenda') or if your prefer, 'a National Economic Assessment involving trade unions, employers and the government' ('Towards 2000').

Edmonds and Tuffin go on to invoke the centralised bargaining systems of Japan and West Germany with the twist that, "our fight against inflation could be strengthened if more of our major negotiations were concentrated in the first three months of the year", with the government then stepping into directly determine wage settlements for certain very low paid sectors, at the end of the year round.

The *Financial Times* was very impressed by both documents ("some of the phrases they use... would sit well in a company report") but warned of a difficulty: "to persuade their colleagues in the labour movement that their plans are different from the incomes policies of the 1970s which brought so much opprobrium, and arguably electoral defeat on the Labour government".

Precisely. Meanwhile, with the Hussein wild card likely to send inflation spiralling past that magic 10% mark, how will rank and file trade unionists react to proposals for a re-run of the Social Contract? Alan Tuffin's members in British Telecom, for instance, have just turned down an 8.8% offer and seem unimpressed by talk of "Britain's need to stay cost competitive with leading European partners... with unavoidable consequences for bargaining and pay levels".

But, like me, they are simple souls who may take a little persuading before they appreciate the benefits of The New Agenda.

## Witch-hunt in Bury

By Tony Dale

**R**ob McLoughlin, branch secretary of Bury NALGO, is being witch-hunted by right wingers inside the union.

He has been accused of sexual harassment by the full time Branch Administrator. The accusations have been used by the press and political opponents inside the union to smear him without a fair hearing.

Around Bury Town Hall a bulletin entitled 'NALGO members beware' has been using the issue as part of an organised campaign against Rob McLoughlin.

The accusations of sexual harassment coincided with the launch of a campaign by a section of the branch executive against Rob McLoughlin and other branch officers over their opposition to the poll tax.

Bury NALGO have consistently opposed the national union leaders position on the poll tax. They have helped organise support for a 'Don't Pay, Don't Collect' position. Bury NALGO has been in dispute over the pay and conditions for those workers expected to implement the poll tax. At present the branch leadership is organising opposition to cuts caused by the poll tax.

Suspicious were raised when opponents were quick off the mark in capitalising on the Branch Administrator's complaints. Nevertheless claims of sexual harassment are serious and need to be fully and fairly investigated.

Bury NALGO branch executive have had a series of meetings on the issue. These meetings climaxed in the branch executive overwhelmingly passing a motion of full confidence in Rob McLoughlin.

On Friday 10 August Rob McLoughlin was summoned to a hearing organised by the district officials of NALGO and TGWU.

The nature of the hearing was never clearly stated — it was not clear whether it was a disciplinary hearing or not.

Rob McLoughlin was only given a couple of days notice of the hearing. He was informed that neither he nor his representatives would be present while the Branch Administrator or her witnesses gave evidence. He would also not have the opportunity to call his own witnesses.

The hearing was going to be an undemocratic stich up. As a result, Rob McLoughlin and his representatives walked out, refusing to legitimise a sham hearing.

Rob McLoughlin is confident that in a fair hearing his name will be cleared. The present shambles of injustice is fast becoming a witch-hunt against a left wing branch secretary.

## Liverpool clashes escalate

### TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

By Dale Street

**B**ailiffs were called in by the right wing leadership of Liverpool City Council Labour Group last Wednesday, 8 August, in order to evict members of the Town Hall union NALGO who were occupying the council chambers.

About 80 NALGO members had occupied the chambers, an hour before a council meeting was due to begin, in protest at the council's recently adopted policy of deducting one fifth of a week's salary (rather than one seventh) for every day any council worker is on strike. 28 workers in the Environmental Health Department had already been on strike for a fortnight over the issue.

When the NALGO members in occupation refused to move in order to allow the council meeting to go ahead, the Labour Group leaders gave the go-ahead for an application to the local County Court for an injunction giving the City Council repossession of its Town Hall.

Meanwhile, protesters outside the building lobbied councillors over a number of other issues:

- a £4 a week increase in council rents;
  - a cut in funding for the Merseyside Trade Union Centre;
  - a notice to quit for the Merseyside Anti-Poll-Tax Federation, which currently has rent-free premises in the city centre;
  - a cut in funding for the "Drug Free" voluntary sector organisation;
  - inadequate support for local workshops for the blind.
- Once council officials served the writ from the County Court, the NALGO

members moved out, escorted by bailiffs and police. The council meeting went ahead. The right of the Labour Group voted for the cuts and rent increase, the left voted against them, and the Liberals abstained.

The split voting by Labour councillors was merely a reflection of the "civil war" now raging in the Labour Party in Liverpool. 29 Labour councillors have been suspended from the Labour Group by the National Executive, which has also suspended the District Labour Party and the Liverpool

Labour Women's Council. Needless to say, all the suspended councillors are on the left. A number of wards with right-wing councillors have passed resolutions of no confidence in them and are calling for them to resign.

The conflict within the Labour Party is guaranteed to escalate in the months ahead.

The council has been selling off its assets, especially land, to try to remain afloat financially. But now it has little left to sell. It is assuming that 95% of poll tax due will be paid, but will be

lucky to get 70 per cent. Liverpool's population is also continuing to fall, faster than any other city in the country, thus reducing the council's income whilst adding to problems of inner city blight.

The dispute with NALGO over deductions from the pay packets of striking workers is also set to escalate. Key workers in the poll tax department and the main switchboard telephonists are currently being balloted on strike action. The workers are likely to vote overwhelmingly in favour of strikes.

## Poll tax cuts in Southwark

By Roy Webb

**S**outhwark Council has virtually closed its Lesbian and Gay unit and closed down the local women's aid refuge, in a package of £8 million cuts to meet the poll tax cap.

Most of the cuts are in Social Services with services to the elderly worst hit. One holiday centre is closed; one day centre goes; and costs go up for meals on wheels and home helps. Each pensioner will be 'assessed' to see if they will be allowed to keep the home help they desperately need.

One swimming bath is to be 'privatised' and one library closed completely.

With a virtual freeze on all recruitment, there are effective cuts in all departments. Voluntary sector grants will be hit.

Yet millions will still be spent on private consultants — some of whom cost over £200 a day to tell the council nothing they couldn't know by asking the existing workforce. Millions are also

wasted on crackpot schemes like the new performance appraisal schemes and on senior officers' staff cars, while vital front-line services are cut.

The whole situation is the result of the failure of the Labour party to adopt any sort of fighting strategy against Tory policies — to the point where Southwark is even using the government's discredited SSA's (Standard Spending Assessments) as a way of telling if services are being provided to adequate levels!

Southwark NALGO has a branch policy of moving to a ballot for strike action should any of its members be threatened by redundancies or com-

pulsory redeployment. It's likely this will be triggered soon, and the most likely response will be some sort of selective action followed quickly by an all out strike.

But as yet Southwark NALGO's commitment to all-out strike isn't as solid as other NALGO branches in other poll-tax-capped authorities, such as Camden, Hillingdon, or Ealing.

In the Labour Party, one ward party has launched a campaign against some of the cut backs which could grow as discontent spread with the way the cuts are being carried out and the way none of it is being discussed at the local General Committees.

## Sheffield dispute

By Chris Croome

**4** 50 NALGO and APEX members in the Design and Building Services department of Sheffield City Council are being balloted for industrial action this week.

The dispute has arisen over a planned move from city centre offices to new offices in the Lower Don Valley — the former steel heartland.

The staff's two main concerns are pollution levels — it is a heavy industrial area considered too contaminated for housing and loss of amenities.

Last October management decided

without any consultation with the staff to purchase the £4 million prestige offices. They have only just installed on site pollution monitoring equipment, when the move is due in a fortnight, and have refused to offer any compensation for loss of amenities.

Members are being balloted on refusing to cooperate with the move and, in the event of suspensions, taking all out strike action.

The workers are potentially in an extremely strong position to win their demands since the department made £3 million profit last year, and any disruption of building contracts would leave the council wide open to massive compensation claims from building contractors.

## Skulduggery in UCATT

**S**trange things are going on in the building workers' union UCATT.

A shadowy organisation called the "UCATT Democratic Society" has been circulating literature aimed at discrediting the left-wing candidate, Peter Lenahan, in the North West region election for a place on the union's Executive.

The "UCATT Democratic Society" has somehow managed to obtain documents — including a 29 year old newspaper clipping from the *Wigan Observer* — that purport to show that Lenahan has a criminal record. This has then been used to bolster support for the right wing incumbent, Jack Rogers.

Who would have compiled such information? Either someone in or around the "Democratic Society" has had a personal vendetta against Lenahan for the past 29 years, or the

"Democratic Society" has got hold of the files of some other organisation which systematically compiles information on the public and private lives of trade unionists.

The material has been circulated inside the union — though the right wing has officially banned such election literature, as a way of preventing the growth of left-wing unofficial movements — using an address list which, it would appear, is very similar to the official union list.

Rank and file activist Brian Higgins explained: "The only two organisations that make the same spelling mistake with my address are the general office of UCATT and the 'UCATT Democratic Society'."

All this will take some explaining. At the very least there should be an open democratic labour movement inquiry into these events. The election should be re-run.

### CLPs Conference Network

Briefing conference for CLP delegates to Labour Party conference

Saturday 8 September Unity Hall, Westgate, Wakefield

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# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

# End the Ban!

By Dorothy Macedo  
(press officer, 'End the Ban!')

The End the Ban! committee was set up on 1 August to campaign against the decision by the NEC on 25 July to proscribe *Socialist Organiser*.

The banning of *SO* marks a new low in terms of internal democracy in the Labour Party. The rules of natural justice have been disregarded in the most blatant manner.

No democrat would accept the legitimacy of a court which sentenced people in their absence without informing them of the accusations against them, and without giving them the chance to see and refute the evidence against them. Yet this is exactly what has happened to *SO*.

We want the next Labour Government to act to safeguard people's civil liberties. How can anyone be confident that they will do this when they treat their own members in such an appalling way?

The End the Ban! committee



will be working to get Labour Party branches, CLPs, trade unions and other LP affiliates to pass resolutions opposing this outrageous ban. It will also seek to raise the question at Annual Conference.

It is important that support is mobilised quickly. We need a massive display of opposition to impress on the NEC that this ban is unacceptable and must be lifted.

More on the ban page 3

## Taking a stand

"I've always said that the Party should always challenge ideas with ideas. Bureaucratic means should not be used to combat ideas."  
Alan Quinn TGWU Nat Exec

"I am totally opposed to witch-hunts in the Party."  
"The Labour Party NEC is allowing UDM members to join the Labour party after those people have been rejected by their Constituency Labour Parties. At the same time the NEC is witch-hunting socialists in the Labour Party. It is diabolical."  
Henry Richardson Notts NUM

"We are talking about censorship — and it is absolutely intolerable. The Labour Party rule book appears to offer fairness to everybody — unless you happen to disagree with the leadership."  
Billy Etherington Vice President NE Area NUM

"The Bakers Union's position is a clear one: any differences in ideas in a workers' organisation should be sorted out through debate. I support your campaign in the Labour Party."  
Joe Marino Bakers Union

"This is the sort of affront to natural justice which I am in the Labour Party to fight against."  
Stewart Stacey Secretary NUR Birmingham No.4

"Black Sections reaffirms its opposition to all witch-hunts. "In the past we have defended Militant although we have serious disagreements with them. We are for the right of democratic dissent in the Party."  
"We know all about witch-hunts. Many of us have been the victims of previous witch-hunts."  
Marc Wadsworth Black Sections

"I have consistently and strongly opposed witch-hunts in the Labour Party, the latest one of which is against *Socialist Organiser*. The Party should be concentrating all its fire against the Tories not against socialists."  
Harry Cohen MP

## Oil rig workers pile on the pressure

Ray Ferris reports from Aberdeen

'We got the result today, fact!' announced Ronnie McDonald of the

Offshore Industry Liaison Committee after the fourth successive strike in 11 days.

74 offshore installations were affected, bringing in new strikers and those downmanned from previous stoppages.

The determination to fight has spread to onshore workers. 50 walked out at MOD Coulpport on Monday, 200 at Browns Engineering on Tuesday. Over the weekend workers at two rigbuilding yards, Davey and Ardersier and St Fergus gas terminal came out spontaneously in solidarity.

The action has encouraged workers employed directly by the oil companies too. Workers at Shell's Brent C voted on on shift by 8 to 1 to leave their staff association and 6 to 1 for union representation. A telex intercepted by OILC stated "there comes a stage at which people will not take it anymore, and that point is rapidly approaching".

This prompted Ronnie McDonald to admit he'd "love to see Shell staff looking to the same sort of solutions we want in the North Sea".

Contraction bosses in the OCC had done everything they could to sabotage this strike. They forced many workers to sign no strike agreements on pain of dismissal before allowing them back offshore. And they phoned round workers on the beach asking them to undermine the action. But the response of a contract worker from Glasgow was typical. "I can't wait to get back out there on Thursday so I can down tools".

After failing to sink the strike the OCC launched a campaign of lies. Announcing that 80% worked normally they also made conciliatory noises towards the OILC in a press statement.

"Total bloody nonsense, sheer fantasy" said Ronnie McDonald of these figures, adding "it appears they already have peace, so why are they suing for it? By their own figures there isn't a problem".

The truth is that both the OCC and especially the oil companies have been shaken by the scale and determination of these strikes. They need to take advantage of the summer weather to repair the ageing rigs and to fit safety valves insisted on after the Piper Alpha disaster — but actually recommended 10 years ago. The stoppages now threaten production and profits in the future.

The striking contract workers are in a strong position. They should press home their advantage by stepping up the pressure on both the OC and oil companies now.

Representatives of the OILC will be meeting leaders of the 7 trade unions with offshore members on Thursday.

It is vital that control of the strike does not fall out of the hands of the OILC. This could lead to a shabby deal.

Send messages of support, donations, requests for speakers to OILC, c/o 52 Guild Street, Above Criterion Bar, 3rd Floor, Aberdeen, AB1 2NB.

# oilc

The Offshore Industry Liaison Committee is demanding a UK continental shelf agreement.

Basically they want a machinery to negotiate the pay and conditions of all offshore workers. Safety and job security are top of the agenda.

The contractors, under pressure from oil companies, continue to refuse a democratic ballot on union recognition.

The OILC is also demanding the rescinding of all mass sackings and guarantees of no victimisation for offshore workers fighting for union recognition.

## What you can do

- Circulate the leaflet which 'End the Ban' has produced to explain the arguments. Order copies from the address below. (Please send stamps to cover postage: 37p for 20, 62p for 50, £1.25 for 100).
- Invite a speaker from 'End the Ban!' to your ward, CLP or trade union branch.
- Mandate your CLP delegate to support reference back of the section on the ban in the NEC Report at Labour Party Annual Conference.
- Ask your CLP to adopt an emergency motion on the ban for Labour Party Conference. This must begin with a reference to something which happened after 17 August.
- Move resolutions in your trade union that the union should support reference back of the NEC Report on the ban.
- Get together with others in your area to organise a local 'End the Ban!' meeting with the widest possible platform and sponsorship.
- Come to the national 'Rally against the Ban!' on 1 September.

### RALLY AGAINST THE BAN

Saturday 1 September,  
2pm to 5pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London  
WC1

Contact: End the Ban! c/o Martin Thomas,  
12a Canonbury St, London N1 2TD.

All statements in a personal capacity

More on the ban: page 3