

The main enemy is at home!

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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

No war in the Gulf



Demonstrate
Saturday 15 September
London



US and Egyptian troops mobilise for Kuwaiti oil — they did nothing for the Kurds massacred by Saddam Hussein (below)

Troops out of the Gulf!



Eric Heffer's speech in Parliament on 7 September

No-one is suggesting that Saddam Hussein's action in entering and taking over Kuwait can be justified. It is only unfortunate that many in

the west have only just discovered that Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator.

Some of us have argued for a long time, and have warned that his actions were such that he should have been condemned by the world, as other dictators should have been condemned by the world.

I raised the question of the destruction by chemical weapons of the Kurds. That did not occur on just one occasion. When it first happened, no-one took the slightest notice. The only reason why notice

was taken in 1988 was that the Kurds showed television crews what had happened.

Saddam Hussein has been operating a policy of destroying the Kurdish population for a long time. Thousands of Kurds have been killed, yet very little was done about that. The United States of America did its utmost to see that the matter was not discussed at the United Nations. That was a disgraceful action and we should not forget it.

Some of us spent a long time in the forces in the last war. Some of

us had very distinguished records, while others of us had not so distinguished records. That does not matter, because we all bear it in mind that we lost many of our friends. I shall never forget them. It is emotional for me because I remember them now.

They included youngsters with whom I went to school. I have lived on borrowed time, like all of us who were in the forces. I think also of the civilians who were killed. Look what happened to our cities — London, Liverpool, Coventry and Belfast. We should remember the

destruction that occurred and the killing of thousands and thousands of innocent civilians.

We had to fight that war, but Hitler was not Saddam Hussein, and Saddam Hussein is not Nasser. At least Nasser genuinely believed in a united Arab nation. Saddam Hussein is not in that category, but that still does not mean that we should want to see war come about in the belief that that is the only answer. I passionately do not believe that it is the only answer. I

Turn to page 12

Stop the Bush/Thatcher war drive! Iraq out of Kuwait!

2 THE GULF



This war is about oil

From back page

seen as the product of a parliamentary majority?

The real issue is this. Everybody knows it, and nobody has mentioned it. The Americans want to protect their oil supplies. I think that I am right in saying that not one Member on either side of the House has drawn attention to what the former Attorney-General of the United States, Ramsey Clark, said on the radio last night. He said that the United States forced Saudi Arabia to accept its army there because it wanted to protect its oil.

We are experienced as an imperial power and that will not shock the Conservatives. I am not asking anyone to be shocked, only to recognise the fact that stares us in the face. America has benefited much recently from cheap middle eastern oil. It was reported in the *Financial Times* that it has reduced its oil production and increased its oil imports from 31 per cent to 52 per cent. It has become hooked on this cheap fluid that now has to be controlled by the American army. That is honestly the position. The United States want a permanent base.

I have not had a distinguished military career, but I served in Egypt in 1945 and I still have my identity card saying that I was exempt from Egyptian law. I looked at it the other day. We had a base at Tel-el-Kevir in Egypt from 1888, when Mr Gladstone put it there, to 1956. If one talked to any Egyptians, all they did was read a list of promises by successive British governments about when we would withdraw our base. We withdrew in 1956 and were in again within a few weeks.

Then there is the arms trade. That has been brought out a bit. A couple of years ago in Algiers I met a former Egyptian Foreign Minister who told me that there had been a seminar in Cairo about the crusades and that during the crusades European arms manufacturers supplied arms both to Richard Coeur de Lion and to Saladin. Nothing has really changed.

Arms manufacturers have made billions of pounds from selling instruments of mass destruction, partly to hold down these colonial people so that the sheikhs will supply cheap oil, and partly because it is highly profitable to sell arms. I shall not try to differentiate between Governments because the Labour Government did it too.

The arms trade is a corrupt trade. If our troops have to fight those of Saddam Hussein — and I hope that that does not happen — they will be

fighting against modern weapons in part sold by Britain, France, America and Russia for profit. That is a major issue.

If we go to war, and there are those who think that we might — what will be our war aims? That is not an unreasonable question. Will it be to free Kuwait, to topple Hussein or to destroy Iraqi weapons? My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition went further than the Prime Minister in setting the objective. She said that it was to arrest Saddam Hussein and to bring him before an international crimes tribunal. The Prime Minister said that on television. Are British troops to be sent in to fight before their objective has been clarified? The Government have never made clear what is their aim. However, it is clear that the United States, having helped to arm Hussein is determined to bring him down and to establish a new base.

I do not need to dwell on the consequences of war. They include a massive loss of life and possibly an air attack on oil installations. In the peculiar circumstances, we would to some extent, if not in every sense, be taking on Islam. Stalin is remembered for asking a very silly question. He asked how many battalions the Pope had.

We should ask how many divisions the prophet Mohammed had. There are 105 million Muslims in India alone. We have some here, too. I am sure that the BBC World Service will explain that that has nothing to do with the situation, but there are people who will see our action as an attempt to reimpose a white, rich control over an area once dominated by the British empire.

The Prime Minister courteously gave way to me when I asked what I hope was a relevant question. She said three times — so she must have meant it — that she already has the legal right to attack Iraq and that no further stages are necessary. The only consideration is that that will be done not at her discretion but that of President Bush. I say that anyone who goes into the Lobby with the Government tomorrow night will be endorsing the view that no further action is needed to legalise an attack on Iraq. Those who vote with the Government tomorrow will be voting for giving the Prime Minister a free hand or a blank cheque.

Those who vote against the Government will be accepting the view expressed in my early-day motion, which calls on the Government "to make a clear and unequivocal statement that it will not commit British Forces to offensive military operations against Iraq that have not been explicitly authorised by a Resolution passed by the

Security Council, and under the provisions of the UN Charter, which deal with the use of force by the United Nations, and under its military command."

I referred to two points of view, but others may think that it is better to reserve judgement and not to vote at all. Even those who cannot go with my view may not want to give the Prime Minister a free hand between now and 15 October.

Yet another view has been constructively touched upon by other speakers. I refer to the belief that peace is possible, but that one must take a broad view of the factors involved.

One must look both at the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and UN resolutions relating to the West Bank. One cannot pick and choose between Security Council resolutions. One must have both a Palestinian state and security for Israel.

One must deal also with the oil companies that are busy exploiting the situation as much as they can. There has been a 7 per cent fall in oil production worldwide but a 100 per cent increase in its price. How is that justified? Thank God for Winston Churchill who, in 1914, when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Company for £2 million. His speech on that occasion made the strongest case for public control and ownership of oil companies that one can find. Winston Churchill said that countries were being squeezed by the oil companies.

If there is to be a peace-keeping force, it would be better if it were Arab, but I turn to the longer, post-cold-war perspective to which our attention has been properly drawn by a number of speeches. One cannot have a new order for the Middle East based on the redeployment of white power in the form of a permanent American army in Saudi Arabia. That will not work.

One is no longer dealing with the natives who featured in Rudyard Kipling's poems but with a quite different world. For me, the United Nations is the General Assembly, not the bigwigs, permanent and rotating members who sit on the Security Council. I personally would like to see direct elections to the General Assembly. They might only return one British Member of Parliament, but I would certainly be a candidate, if that were possible.

We are always being told that we must come to terms with reality and that we must not live in the past. The fact remains that we live in a very small world of many religions. There are fundamentalist Christians. When President Reagan spoke of an evil empire, he was

declaring a Christian jihad against communism. Anyone who has visited America and listened to those Christian fundamentalists, who have not got into trouble and been removed, will know that they make their reputations out of their religious wars against communism. However, as right hon. and hon. Members know very well, the Americans stimulated Islam to defeat communism — but when communism changed, fundamentalism remained.

We shall have to plan and share the world's oil. America has only 2 per cent of the world's population but uses 25 per cent of the world's resources. That situation cannot be allowed to last, even if America has a big army. The real function of the United Nations is to act as the custodian of social justice. It should not serve just as a policeman.

Those members who support the Government's interpretation of the law, and their readiness to use their discretion without referring back to the House again, will vote with the Government in the Lobby tomorrow. Those who oppose the Government will vote with us while others should abstain. I urge caution because many other western European nations are being very cautious and have not sent troops. Many of the non-aligned countries are not really behind the action being taken by America and Britain.

It is time to try to take some of the hate out of the situation. I shall never forget the day I was first elected to Parliament. No one ever does. It was 30 November 1950. That same day President Truman said that he might drop an atom bomb on China. We were then using against the red Chinese the language that we are now using against Saddam Hussein.

They were seen as being worse than the Russians. Nevertheless, there was a Peace for China committee, and China was later admitted to the United Nations. Whatever the Chinese government may have done in Tiananmen Square, no one wants a war with the Chinese, otherwise they would not have been given Hong Kong. So much for the right of self-determination.

Morality and power march uneasily together in public life. At the time of the Suez crisis, we clashed. What was said then about Nasser is exactly the same as what is being said now about Saddam Hussein.

The Falklands may be too close for comfort. There are not all that many people who, looking back, think that that huge expenditure was justified. I do not think so. I have been in a minority before and I might be in one now, but that does not worry me.

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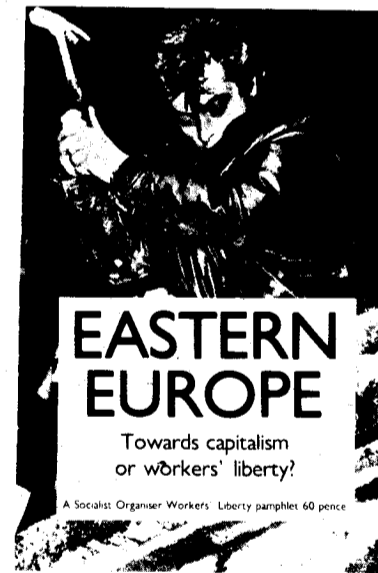
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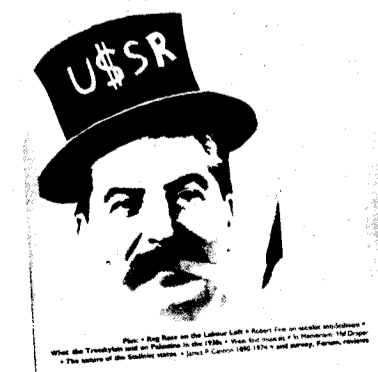
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The war drive continues

EDITORIAL

America's war to smash Iraq militarily and to secure US control of Gulf oil has not started yet.

But the drive towards war is still in high gear. The build-up in preparation for war continues with unflagging intensity.

At the Helsinki summit George Bush appeared to commit himself against an immediate attack on Iraq. But the US drive to war continues.

If the US doesn't win a bloodless victory by forcing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, they will go to war. The chances of avoiding war are in fact remote. Saddam Hussein shows no sign of buckling to the existing pressures (and thus committing suicide).

The world is still on the road to war. The danger now is that the apparent slowing down of the tempo will demobilise the anti-war forces in countries like Britain. *It is the job of socialists to see that it does not.*

If anybody needs proof that we are heading towards war, the drum-beating crescendo of war propaganda in the media proves it. And the propaganda is also proof of the nature of the war being prepared — an imperialist war for oil against Third World people who are not as important as "our people".

Consider the hostages. The but-

cher Saddam Hussein, armed and supported for ten years by the West while he was gassing Kurds, is only being himself when he uses Britons, Americans and others as hostages to add to the political price his enemies will have to pay at home for air strikes at Iraqi installations. It is natural that the plight of the hostages excites attention. Natural, too, that they are used to whip up hatred and war-fever against Iraq.

But as well as the white hostages there are tens of thousands of refugees — Egyptians, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Filipinos — who have fled the looming war and are now starving in Jordan. Some have already died. Many — perhaps millions more — will follow the same route out of Iraq, and large numbers will die if war breaks out.

Contrast the media focus on "our" hostages with the small interest in those who are starving to death in Jordan!

It shows up and symbolises what's really going on: this war, seemingly provoked by Iraq's brutal aggression, is already turning into an old-fashioned confrontation between imperialism and the Third World. It can, by way of spreading Arab resentment at the invading armies and against those Arab rulers who invited them in and ally with them, turn into a Vietnam-type war in which the US and its allies will pit themselves against the local people in an unjust and unwinnable war.

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



Asian contract workers, fleeing war in Kuwait and Iraq, are suffering starvation, heat exhaustion and disease in refugee camps in Jordan.

An English joke?

Head the latest "English" joke? This one caps the story about the thick Tory who set out to stifle the voice of 'terrorism' by putting a ban on viewers being allowed to hear the real voices of Sinn Fein and IRA leaders in TV interviews, and insisting instead that actors read the words to accompany the on-screen mouth movements of the 'terrorists' being 'quoted', whose voices are silenced as part of a clever English war on terrorism.

Now — according to the latest far-fetched story going the rounds at the Home Office — Tories have extended that ban to include historical 'terrorists', like Eamonn De Valera!

The makers of a historical documentary due to be shown on

Ulster TV have been forced to use actors to dub the voices of Eamonn De Valera and Sean MacBride.

MacBride left the IRA in 1938 or '39, and he was later the 26 Counties' foreign minister. De Valera broke with the IRA in 1926. From the '30s to the '50s, as 26 Counties Prime Minister, he jailed, shot, and (as late as 1957-9) interned without trial suspected members of the IRA.

But you can't be too careful. Maybe De Valera in his last 40 years or so was just kidding, or an IRA 'sleeper'. Perhaps there is coded subversion in those old films of De Valera and MacBride?

Or maybe the IRA has infiltrated the Home Office, and this latest ban is their work? Dirty propaganda to keep the racist myth of the thick Englishman alive!

Build the Campaign Against War in the Gulf

By Mark Sandell

Campaign Against War in the Gulf groups are being set up in all areas of the country.

Activities — street meetings, pickets and leafletting — are taking place in many towns.

- In Manchester, the Army Recruitment Office has been picketed.

- In Sheffield the town centre has been leafleted and Saturday shoppers asked to sign a petition demanding the withdrawal of troops.

- In London tube stations have been leafleted and street meetings organised.

- In Canterbury the street meeting attracted the local radio and newspapers. 2,000 leaflets were handed out.

Set up a local group in your area. Write to CAWG, c/o 7c Cumberland Park, London W3.

Nationally, CAWG has produced 50,000 leaflets, 5,000 posters and placards and stickers for the 15 September demonstration. The demonstration is now being organised by the broad Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. The committee includes religious groups, the Green Party and the SLD.

CAWG has agreed to add its backing to the committee. CAWG conceives its role as organising a specifically labour movement element to the more general anti-war movement and organising on the basis of **No war in the Gulf! and US-British troops out!** In other words, CAWG aims to argue that peace in the Gulf can only be assured by pulling the massive US-spearheaded army out of the area — a sharper set of demands than the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

So CAWG conceives its role as complementary to the Committee — not as an alternative.

You would not think there would be friction between the Committee and CAWG. You would be wrong. Friction has been artificially stoked up by the semi-Stalinist grouplet Socialist Action.

A Socialist Action supporter Carol Turner is the secretary of the Committee, and Socialist Action has spent a considerable amount of time mudslinging rather than building the demo.

In a letter to this Monday's *Morning Star* (11 September), Carol Turner makes quite a spirited attempt to create the maximum friction between the two organisations. I hope Carol's co-signatories realise that maximum friction is the aim of the letter.

The letter says: "CAWG has nothing to do with our Committee". Rather an odd claim for someone who was present at the CAWG meeting last Thursday (6th) which formally agreed to get involved with the Committee (a task which would be easier if we were informed of meetings!)

The letter claims the leaflets we have produced are misleading. All we have done is produce 50,000 leaflets under the Campaign's logo advertising a demonstration which we were the original organisers of, and which we handed over to the Committee (via CND) because we believed they could organise a bigger demonstration. What's wrong with this? The CND activists who have taken our leaflets seem quite happy with them.

I hope the Saturday demonstration is huge. One thing is certain: the time that the current demo organiser, Carol Turner, has wasted factionalising for Socialist Action will make the demo smaller than it could have been.

If I quack, I'm a duck

By now nearly everyone will have heard of M. Jourdain, the social-climbing character in a 17th century French comedy.

M. Jourdain, you remember, was dead chuffed to discover he could speak in prose, and had been doing so for years. In fact, he had been doing it all his life, and never suspecting himself for the clever and accomplished chap he was.

Like M. Jourdain, Nina Temple, general secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain (the *Marxism Today* faction), is making amazing discoveries about herself. So is her entire organisation, which has just decided that it is no longer any kind of Communist or socialist party, and will change its name at its Congress next December. Ms Temple favours the name "Radical Party".

Ms Temple, last in a line of six general secretaries over the 70 years since the party was moulded by Lenin's Communist International out of previously existing groups to lead the British working-class revolution, announces (according to the *Morning Star*): "I have never been a Marxist-Leninist because it was too restrictive", adding that she has not "rejected Marxism as such". "The ideology of the new organisation will be drawn from humanist and Green traditions rather than Marxism-Leninism". Naturally — from where else could they draw it?

The truth, of course, is that the CP has been speaking this sort of "prose" for 50 years and more, but it has been disguised under Stalinist jargon so that most of those speak-

ing it didn't know what it was. Now at least they know. Gorbachev has told them.

What's new is the recognition, the self-identification. The CPs have time and again sold out the interests of the working class. For 55 years, since the 7th World Congress of the Communist International in 1935, they have been openly pacifist (when it served the foreign policy of the USSR), and advocates of coalitions with Liberals and Conservatives (when it served, etc.).

They have spent their time and energy — that is, the time and energy of millions of workers who wanted to be socialists — defending and justifying horrors perpetrated by Stalinist regimes compared to which Britain under Thatcher is a paradise on earth.

They have defined the socialist goal — for them always distant, always subordinated to the campaign for "peace" or for some "progressive" government or leader — by the model of the USSR.

For them, the working-class movement in which they originated has at best been a power-base: they long ago ceased to see their role as that of pioneers fighting to prepare the working class and its movement to seize power from the capitalists and remake society. They long ago ceased to see the working class as other than one possible element in their schemes and perspectives.

They kept in step with the stagnant verbiage of the official ideology of the Stalinist state, whose rulers claimed their legitimacy from the working-class revolution of October 1917. There

was as much sense in that claim as there was to the claim of Charles King of the Franks, who had himself crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day 800, that he ruled in the name of the Senate and People of Rome. Stalin destroyed the workers' revolution 60 years ago.

Now it's all gone. Gorbachev is restoring capitalism.

Gorbachev's bourgeois revolution has released them. They can stop speaking a strange language full of incongruous slogans about the working class and socialism. Now, still in step with the Kremlin, they speak the plain prose of bourgeois and petty bourgeois politics. They even begin to recognise themselves openly for what they are. The party's general secretary — the true heir of Harry Pollitt and John Gollan — affirms that she has "never been a Marxist-Leninist". That is progress.

March Against War in the Gulf

Saturday 15 September

Assemble 1.30

North Wharf Road, Paddington

March to Hyde Park

Speakers: Tony Benn, Diane Abbott, Ken Cameron

Organised by Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

Picket the US Embassy

5.30-7.00

Wednesday 19 September

Grosvenor Square (tube: Marble Arch)

Public Meeting

7.30

Thursday 20 September

ULU, Malet St, London WC1

Speakers: Jeremy Corbyn MP and others

Organised by CAWG

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

Karl Marx

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4 POLL TAX



Poll tax protesters in Nottingham. Photo: Rich Cross.

'Trade unions were created to defend working people'

National Union of Teachers executive member Andy Dixon made the keynote speech at last weekend's conference on trade unions and the poll tax organised by the Socialist Movement trade union committee

This so-called new realism is really old defeatism. It accepts the political ground of the Tories, it accepts the dominance of the Murdoch and Maxwell press over working people's ideas, it refuses to challenge the individualism of Tories with the belief in collective values and solidarity that trade unionism is really based on.

I was in Blackpool on Tuesday and heard Neil Kinnock saying that the labour movement should not ask for favours but for justice and rights. Where is the justice in telling Labour councillors to carry out the poll tax legislation, where is the justice in kicking out Labour councillors in Liverpool for opposing the poll tax and rent rises?

Kinnock also said on Tuesday that "it's a pretty strange set of principles that produces martyrdom for the followers and never sacrifice from the leaders". He could have been describing the Labour front bench. Pay the poll tax, suffer the cuts, obey the anti-union laws, keep the anti-union laws under a Labour government — so Neil doesn't have to sacrifice his subsidies from Maxwell and his desperate bid for power at any price.

At our union conference at Easter delegates voted to oppose redundancies resulting from the poll tax or poll tax capping with national action including national strike action. Our leadership tried desperately to prevent this resolution being passed, wheeling on the union's solicitor to argue that such action would be illegal under the Tory anti-union laws.

Since the passing of that resolution the union leadership have refused to implement it, instead preferring to encourage the selling of teachers' jobs up and down the country in the most unscrupulous manner. We cannot effectively defend our members or the services in which we work without confronting the Tories and the poll tax.

At the NUT conference the President even ruled out of order most of the main motion on the poll tax which had been prioritised for debate by democratic voting by the membership.

There was a motion from the Bakers' Union on the poll tax on the agenda for the TUC this week. It called for Congress to "express its solidarity with those low paid families in the UK who cannot pay this tax and condemns the poll tax as an invidious attack on working people." An amendment went on to state: "If the tax is to be defeated, it will require a mass campaign of non-payment, non-collection and non-implementation, backed up by mass industrial action."

The TUC and Labour leadership did not want their refusal to take on the challenge of the poll tax exposed. They thought it would not be in keeping with Kinnock's new-look one-viewpoint labour movement to allow trade unionists to actually debate a fight against the poll tax. It came as no surprise when the General Purposes Committee Chair announced that the motion had been withdrawn.

What a criminal failure of the trade union movement in the year in which the poll tax was introduced in England and Wales — the leadership were desperate to avoid even discussing one of the most blatant attacks on social justice this century! This is what new realism means: bend to the Tory press, drop your commitment to struggle, abandon working people to the effects of Tory legislation, and play down expectations of what a Labour government will do.

I want to see a Labour government as much as anyone. I've been a member of the Labour Party for one and a half decades, I've canvassed, leafleted, and knocked-up for left, right and centre Labour candidates. I will not accept that the way to get rid of the Tories is to refuse to fight to defend working people now and leave everything to a future Labour government. Not least because that way it won't be a Labour government worth having.

The trade unions were created to defend working people, advance social justice and provide means for cooperation, solidarity and mutual support. This must mean fighting the poll tax. If the leadership refuses to lead, rank and file trade unionists can and will take up the fight.

The poll tax is not just an attack on working people's living standards and an outrageous affront to fairness and the principles of equality and justice that are at the heart of trade unionism.

It is also an attack on local government jobs, local government workers, local government unions, local democracy and the services that local authorities provide. That means an attack on the education, housing, social services that our communities need, and also an attack on local government workers — their jobs, their conditions and their trade union rights.

Along with all local government workers, teachers are at the sharp end of the cuts resulting from the poll tax. In many areas local councils have been faced with cuts in spending or jacking up the poll tax: either alternative hammering the communities those councils were elected to serve. This has hit schools in many ways: less money for books and equipment, longer delays for overdue repairs to buildings, and most importantly cuts in spending on staff, teaching and non-teaching.

Part-timers and people on temporary contracts and supply staff (mostly women) have, of course, been the first to be hit. The poll tax capped authorities have been hardest hit, lopping millions off their budgets. Teachers and others in these areas have shown that they will not accept a further assault on education provision coming on top of years of Tory policies.

In Barnsley the local NUT has launched a magnificent campaign against the Labour council's proposed spending cuts. Unfortunately, Barnsley teachers were forced to start their fight with an unofficial strike since the national leadership of the NUT refused to call the strike even though it achieved a clear majority in a legal ballot.

Despite this the Barnsley NUT received support from the parents and public of Barnsley and from teachers in many other parts of the country. The trade union leaders may not understand the issues arising from the poll tax, but ordinary trade unionists do.

In Rochdale the largest NUT meeting for several years, attended by over 300 teachers (one third of the membership) called for a strike ballot to protect the continued employment of teachers on short-term contracts. The subsequent ballot produced a 75% yes vote. Trade unionists threatened by the effects of the poll tax will be prepared to take action. Our leaderships are failing to coordinate these struggles and build on them.

Our problem is not just that we have a determined and vicious Tory government to fight but also that the leaders of our movement do not believe that a successful fight is possible.

The trade union movement and the Labour Party are afflicted with the disease of new realism. This tells us that it is OK to commemorate the Tolpuddle Martyrs once a year, or applaud trade unionists in South Africa or Eastern Europe who stand up against the state, but that the British labour movement must work within Tory legislation rather than challenge it, must make do and mend in local government rather than fight the cuts, and must sit quiet whilst labour movement principles are ditched so as not to rock the boat while we hope for a Labour government.

summed up the mood of last weekend's Socialist Movement trade union conference on the poll tax.

Well over 200 delegates gathered for a working conference that produced small but tangible results. We discussed building support for striking local government workers in Greenwich, and teachers in Barnsley — both groups of workers involved in action against the effects of poll tax implementation.

A wide selection of workshop discussions took place, ranging from local democracy, to job losses, and trade union support for

mass non-payment.

The outcome of the conference's deliberations will be published as a pamphlet. Informal meetings of NALGO and CPSA members came up with useful initiatives. In the CPSA a branch-based appeal to members not to deduct from benefits is to be launched. NALGO delegates discussed building for the third NALGO Against the Poll Tax conference to be held on December 8.

For more information on the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, contact Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15.

200 at conference

POLL TAX

The poll tax is an attack on the basic fabric of life of working class people. We have to organise opposition to it at every level, in the workplace and in the community."

That was how Betty Heathfield, from Women Against Pit Closures,

Germany unites on 3 October

A year ago no one would have believed it, but on 3 October, East and West Germany will be reunified.

The East German Social Democrats, who have just withdrawn from a coalition with the Christian Democrats, wanted unification even sooner. Others wanted to leave it a week or so; the

final date was a compromise. It makes little difference. An event of major historical importance is to take place.

The problems posed by reunification are huge. The weak East German economy is already suffering from the effects of the Deutschmark dominating it. Unemployment is soaring. East German firms are already collapsing in the face of Western competi-

tion; farmers cannot sell their produce and have organised protests in East Berlin.

The *Economist* warns investors: "The economic news may well get worse before it gets better, bringing with it a 'hot autumn' of strikes, demonstrations and fiercer election campaigning'."

But they expect longer term prospects to be good — for big business.

Lesbians and gays fight bigoted laws

OUT AND PROUD

By Janine Booth

Last Wednesday, 5 September, hundreds of lesbians and gay men gathered in London's Piccadilly Circus to take part in a "kiss-in".

This particularly passionate protest was organised by *Outrage!*, an

new direct action group. It was an act of defiance against the unjust laws and oppressive social attitudes that deny lesbians and gay men the right to show affection in public.

Lesbians and gay men have been arrested and charged under ancient laws such as the 1361 Justices of the Peace Act and modern legislation. Others of us suffer verbal and physical intimidation.

Speaking at the "kiss-in", Peter Tatchell said, "No government, no police officer, and no judge has the right to criminalise lesbians and gay men for showing affection to each other.

"These laws are unjust and discriminatory, and we will not obey them:

"We will not submit to the will of oppressive government, prejudiced laws, repressive police, and bigoted judges who criminalise lesbian and gay love"

Outrage! London meets every Thursday at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, 67-69 Cowcross St, London EC1, and can be contacted on 071-490 7153.

"We ain't here apologising. We say stuff your moralising. It's our right to show affection, scream it, flaunt it, screw the section!"

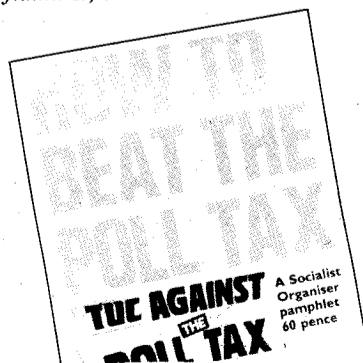
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Will mosques be burned?

Liz Millward looks at racism and the Gulf crisis

Britain's first Race Relations (as opposed to Immigration) Act became law 25 years ago.

In 1976 another Act established the Commission for Racial Equality. The first Act outlawed the most blatant "no coloureds" signs on advertisements for jobs and housing, and the second made provision for tribunals to sit on employment discrimination cases.

Yet racism in housing and employment seems as rampant as ever. It has just gone underground.

Nothing fundamental has changed. Two weeks ago the BBC screened a programme about the struggle of three black women against racism (and sexism) in their employment. In the area where I live, some local people are objecting to the council allocating new housing to 'bed and breakfast' families because they are mainly black. Two Sundays ago the *News of the World* told Muslim "traitors" to "go home".

In all of these cases the black people have legislation on their side. But in no case does this help much. All three black women featured in the BBC programme "won" at industrial tribunals but all said the experience of the tribunal has scarred them for life, and none have been adequately compensated for their loss of job or promotion prospects.

In the case of the black families in new council homes, women and children will have to face the brunt of ingrained local racism. The kids will be a very small minority in local schools, and all the council's anti-racist "statements" will not prevent attacks, graffiti or verbal abuse. There is such a shortage of decent housing in the area that resentment among white working class people (who have been in the area for generations) is easily stirred up into open racism.

As the crisis in the Middle East develops, racist rags like the *News of the World* will continue to pounce on anyone whose racial or religious background puts them on "the wrong side". Thatcher's cuts and continual attacks on the poorest people in society have fostered racism. If "our boys" go to war things will get worse still.

If and when shots are fired in Iraq, Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, racism in Britain will multiply. Black soldiers will die in the Middle East, but that will not stop their families and communities being attacked here. How long will it be before mosques are burnt in the East End or Bradford?

The labour movement in Britain has a responsibility to take up the issue of racism as a part of the campaign against the war. My fear is that the US and British troops will wage war not on Saddam Hussein but on the whole of the Arab population — as they did in Vietnam.

As in Vietnam, US troops in the Middle East are likely to meet mass resistance from the native populations. The war against the populations in the Middle East will be coupled with a war against their supporters here.

Many working class Americans (the "hard hats") were opposed to the Vietnam war — but equally opposed to the student peace movement, which they saw as elitist. Our campaign against this war must not be exclusive but inclusive of all those who will lose out when "our boys" go in. That means the black and Asian communities as well as the white working class.

A third way in the USSR?

Most of the opposition in the USSR now sees private-profit capitalism as the only alternative to Stalinism, and even in the emerging independent trade union movement the "radicals" are usually radical free-marketters. But there are individuals and groups seeking an alternative both to capitalism and to Stalinism. Vadim Orlov, from the International Discussion Club in Moscow, spoke to Nick Lowles

What do you mean by the "third way"?

I mean it is not capitalism and not Communism in the meaning of the words that we know. I mean maybe it is a Swedish social democratic model, maybe something different. As I understand it, it is not the classical capitalistic and not the Communist way in which we have in our country here.

I think that in our country now a lot of youth, who are in opposition to Communism, think that the capitalist way would be good. But I'm not sure, you are from a capitalist country and you know better than I that capitalism has also had some problems and it is natural that it can't achieve the aspirations of all people, but the fact is that the living standards of average people are better in the West than in our country. But I think that capitalism, if we were to introduce it in our country couldn't solve all the problems. Some problems will be solved but others will appear. That is why the idea of the Third Way of development is interesting, a new form of organising society.

What ideas are there in the USSR about the third way of development?

In the average consciousness there are no ideas at all. We do not have any strong political parties outside the Communist Party. Now we have political plurality, it is written that there can be parties, but in reality I think there is only one party that can and does influence the situation. The CP continues to be the state, with its structures, the structures in enterprises, state institutes, the ministries and the army.

How easy is it to get alternative writings, such as Trotsky, and other socialist critiques of Stalinism?

The situation for books and literature is easier. When I left Moscow I brought a book by Trotsky on Stalinist bureaucracy. This was published by a political publishing house. I think it is the first time since the 1920s that Trotsky's work has been openly available in the USSR. In this way the government does improve the situation. You see the Russian history and philosophy is very rich both for names and ideas but we didn't know it. Not only the average person but also historians and students. Now the situation is changing, now we can read them.

What do you think is going to happen in the USSR, do you think Gorbachev is going to survive?

You see it is not only a very difficult question, it is so difficult for us to even understand what is happening in our country. As for Gorbachev I think we can say to him "thank-you very much but goodbye". Because of glasnost we can see what is happening in the world

and how other people live. There is now some democracy in our country, so we must say thanks a lot to Gorbachev. But I'm sure he is from that time, that he has that consciousness. He was created as a political figure by the old Communist Party, as a party leader in that field of time. His mind has all those negative aspects.

There are a lot of examples where he doesn't act consistently, the national question, the problems of the party paper. He is influenced by the Conservatives. It may be difficult for him to do what he wants, that may be so but we must speak of the reality.

What is your view on the national problems of the Republics, especially those of the Baltic states?

If you look at our history Russia has had an empire for a considerable time, dating back to the times of Ivan III and IV. We continue being an Empire but as you know all the great Empires have collapsed in the 20th century. As many scientists have said the 20th century has been the century of nationalism. In many cases they are not wholly independent, but dependent on the West, economically and politically but they are independent states, they are on the map in their own right.

As I see it, it is no bad thing that the Baltic States want their independence. It is natural and I think it is the objective way of developing. Lenin said, and I agree with him on this, that there are two ways of developing under capitalism. Firstly, when capitalism is not so developed, nations want to be independent and there is a process of disintegration. Then when capitalism reaches a higher level it goes through a period of integration, I think we are seeing this in Europe now. While we do not have capitalism in our country, I think we are going through the same process, now we see disintegration and maybe like many politicians think we may integrate on a new basis. I agree with them.

Gorbachev doesn't go about this in the right way, especially in the Baltic states and increasingly we see confrontation. Maybe he understands that this break up must happen but he is facing strong opposition from the conservatives, the army most of all. Maybe we don't understand his action, his manoeuvring between these groups, but I'm sure that this policy may lead to a political explosion.

Do you think there is any possibility of the army and conservatives removing him from power?

Yes I think that is a possibility. Many of us thought that of the 28th Congress of the CP; Gorbachev would not be elected to the position of General Secretary. Yet by the end of the Congress he was stronger and many more liberal positions had been passed.

If the army overthrow Gorbachev would there be a crackdown in the Republics and a confrontation with the people, even civil war?

Yes I'm sure that is the case, there would be civil war, and that is the common view among my friends. The living standards are falling, the people are angry. Compared with the West's standards we don't have any standard of life. The conditions are very bad, and the situation is declining, and so Gorbachev must do something economically and politically by giving independence to the Republics. That may bring him into confrontation with the army and conservatives. At the moment he is between two chairs, two opposing political ideas. It is interesting because often the man who balances between two chairs wins, but it is a very dangerous position, he can easily fall between the two chairs and they can close over him.



Bread queue in Moscow. Some "radicals" say the answer is the free market: others are groping for a "third way".

Do you think there is anything to learn from the introduction of the market in Poland, do you think similar things might happen in the USSR?

Yes I think similar things might happen, but I don't know if that's the way we are going. Our government hasn't decided what it wants: one time they do one thing another time they do another. But all the time the people get angry, and these words 'market economy' have an influence over everyone. There is a wave of protest among common people, we have had 5 years of perestroika and one year of the new government and yet nothing has changed. The people want to know what it all means and what the government is planning to do about it.

As for Poland, you see we found it very difficult when we arrived to understand how it can be that there are all these goods and food. I see that in the West there is more but for us this was enough. Yes the prices are high but at least there is food. For example there are bananas; they may be very expensive, but on every street corner, every shop there are bananas. Maybe you think my example is primitive but for us it is serious; even if we can only buy one banana, it is one more than we can buy in Moscow. I think it is better to have food and have not a lot of money to buy all you want than to have some money but have nothing to buy as is the case in our country.

In the west we hear a lot about the rise of anti-semitism and fascism in your country, is this the case?

Yes. It is a problem in France too. Le Pen is saying that all the problems of France, unemployment etc, is the cause of the Arabs. Such ideas are of course very dangerous, and they could have a big social base in a situation, where the economic level is falling.

As for the anti-semitism, fascism, Russian fascism and especially the organisation 'Pamyat'. Well you see I don't talk to these people, I don't talk with them but according to our press it is a very strong organisation, with large structures, and influence. Well I disagree. To my knowledge, our press — I don't know why — try to enlarge the problem. At the moment

Pamyat is not very dangerous. But as I have said in this situation of declining economic standards it is dangerous, maybe very dangerous.

In Russia the problem is not one of some great fascist party but in the minds of the ordinary people. For example on the bus you can often hear someone saying "what do you want, Jew?" It is nationalism in the common context of the bus, street, etc that is the problem. If you look at our history, there was some explosion of this anti-semitism, even before 1917 it existed and you can read about it if you read some of Lenin's articles.

Yes it is a problem. I don't know if it is a great problem, but I understand when thousands of Jews are leaving the Soviet Union there is a problem. After all they are citizens of our country, it is their homeland, they were born here and now, they are leaving. This is a problem, something must be done.

Can you tell me something about your organisation?

First we were an ecological movement "The Next Stop", I think it was founded in 1985 or '86. We had ties with the Scandinavian countries and also with West Germany. But then in the summer of '89 we decided to broaden our organisation and we transformed ourselves into the International Discussion Club. We organise conferences, exchanges with student and youth groups.

What type of subject does your club discuss?

It is a club to discuss political and economic ideas, primarily political ideas and problems. We do not just discuss issues to do with the USSR but international issues. We are now preparing a conference with our Italian friends to discuss political, economic, social and ecological issues, maybe to be held in Rome. It will be a conference to discuss a third way of development.

Has the Soviet government tried to stop you organising?

No, we are not a political party, so we are not campaigning against the Communists directly. Things have changed over the last few years, there are many political parties, some campaigning against the Communists, some are not. The problem is that most are still very weak.

Israeli reactions to the Gulf crisis

By Adam Keller

For the new rightist, internationally-unpopular Israeli government — with huge problems at home — Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait seemed at first sight a most convenient present from heaven, simply falling into its lap.

Already at the first Iraqi threats against Kuwait, in the middle of July, former Foreign Minister Moshe Arens — at present holding the Defence portfolio — paid a quick visit to Washington, "to warn the Americans", as he now claims.

Shortly after Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait, Arens' successor at the Foreign Ministry, David Levy, made out for Bonn, expatiating with Chancellor Kohl on the Gulf crisis's proving "how marginal the Palestinian problem is for the situation in the Middle East". However, for all its greediness to seize upon the Gulf crisis for propagandic purposes, the government finds itself suddenly faced with a whole set of serious long-term problems.

In the first days after the invasion of Kuwait, the Israeli government tried to get itself included in the American mobilisation of "the free world" against Iraq; these offers were, politely but firmly, rejected by Washington. Any Israeli involvement in the confrontation with Iraq would play into Saddam Hussein's hands and make it more difficult for Arab regimes to cooperate with the Americans.

Israel, which for many years touted itself as "America's strategic ally", found itself in the hour of crisis to be America's embarrassment, to be kept out of sight. It turns out that, with the disappearance of the "Soviet threat", US policies on the Middle East require Arab allies. The main thing required of the Israeli ally is to keep a low profile; the Israeli government generally keeps these instructions, though there are occasional slips of tongue, such as the sentence inserted in Yitzchak Shamir's August 22 speech to an audience of visiting Jewish delegations: "We don't want war. We will try to prevent or pre-empt a war..."

In April 1990 Saddam Hussein first made his threat that, if attacked, he would destroy half of Israel by poison gas. At the time the country was deeply involved in Shimon Peres' desperate efforts to form a government. The distant Iraqi thunder caused a feeling of unease, but did not seem a matter for immediate concern; public attention soon shifted elsewhere. Half a year later the Gulf crisis made the possibility of war with Iraq a concrete, close possibility — and gas masks a public issue.

The 1951 Civil Defence Act entitles all Israeli citizens and residents to get gas masks free of charge. However, the military experts have always opposed the distribution of masks to the general population. Originally the reason given was that the masks may be damaged in citizens' homes before they are needed, and should therefore be distributed only in times of emergency.

For many Israelis the present situation already seems to qualify. The defence experts, however, now argue that gas masks being distributed would cause panic and

escalate regional tensions. Many Israelis have started to search for private means of self-preservation. There is a run on the few shops where gas masks are being sold, and after Israeli television mentioned the possibility of countering the effects of poison gas by breathing through a cloth soaked in baking soda, the sales of this product immediately rose tenfold.

Minister David Levy — a populist politician throughout his career — took up the cause of "the maskless". At the time of writing, the question is surrounded with unprecedented secrecy. It seems more and more likely that in this — like in so many issues in Israel — the Palestinian problem is involved.

"The peace movement is preparing itself. Yesh G'vul activists, who as reserve soldiers refused to serve in Lebanon, or to serve the occupation, are nowadays discussing ways in which mass deportations could effectively be opposed".

There are supposed to be gas masks available for everybody, but whether Palestinians who are citizens of Israel have been included among "everybody" is in question; Palestinians from the Occupied Territories are definitely not, though tens of thousands of them work daily in Israeli cities which may become the target of a gas attack. Could it be that in fact the Palestinians are Israel's "human shield"?

Yizhar Ba'er seems to think so: "The non-distribution of gas masks to inhabitants of the territories can be interpreted, on the strategic level, as placing this population in a hostage-status, another means of deterrence against an unconventional attack by an Arab state." (*Ha'aretz*, 12 August 1990)

Columnist B Micheal of that same *Ha'aretz* suspects the government of "self destructive racialism". In order not to let the whole world know that there are no masks for Palestinians, they just wait with the distribution until it is too late...

Over the past six years, Israeli peaceniks again and again railed at Yitzchak Shamir's stubborn clinging to the status quo and his unwillingness to take any initiative. Ironically, at a time when Israel stands on the brink of war, this very immobility and avoidance could prove a virtue.

Another factor reducing this right-wing government's inclination to seek provocations is the personality of Moshe Arens. Unlike most Israeli Defence Ministers Arens is not an ex-general seeking to round out his military career. Arens, a life-long civilian, could serve as a prototype of the military-industrial-complex theory, investing most of his energy in procuring juicy deals for the giant Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI), with which he has decades-long ties¹. Whatever the long-term drawbacks of having such a Defence Minister, in the present situation he might be less inclined than others to seek glory on the battlefield.

Though Shamir and Arens are certainly less eager for war than Ariel Sharon would have been, had he held one of the key positions, it is needless to say that the peculiarities of the two do not at all provide a guarantee against Israeli involvement in a Gulf war. The decisive factor might be the internal developments in Jordan, the country constituting a fragile buffer between Israel and Iraq.

It was none other than Ratz Knesset member Yossi Sarid who — on the very day of the Kuwait invasion — stated publicly: "Israel must declare that the entry of Iraqi forces into Jordan will constitute a *casus belli*". A few days later Sarid's suggestion was followed by Defence Minister Arens, who proclaimed it to be the official government policy.² The Labor Party, of course, fell in.

Thus, for the first time since June 1982, an atmosphere of "national consensus" was created in Israel. As a result, non-monarchist Israelis find themselves praying fervently for the personal and political survival of King Hussein of Jordan.

In his 38 years on the Jordanian throne, King Hussein earned a justified reputation as a past master at the art of survival, but the present crisis may be the toughest he ever encountered. Already before the Gulf crisis there were violent outbreaks among the king's Palestinian subjects, as well as among the Jordanian ones.

The relatively free elections resulted in an enormous increase of power of the Muslim fundamentalists, and Jordan's economy, already in deep crisis, is due for another heavy blow from the mounting American pressure to close Jordan's port of Aqaba to the profitable Iraqi carrying trade, which directly and indirectly provides tens of thousands of jobs in Jordan.

The hundreds of thousands of penniless Egyptian workers, stuck in Jordan on their way from Kuwait and Iraq back to Egypt, only add to the already existing instability. And the wide support among the Jordanian population for Saddam Hussein's neo-Pan-Arabic rhetoric, is another factor threatening King Hussein's position — possibly weakening him to the point of not being able to resist the entry of Iraqi troops.

According to the Arens-Sarid consensus, in that case the entry of the Israeli army would be an automatic result. A third army may then enter the fray as well — that of Syria, a long-standing enemy of both Israel and Iraq, and a country which has long maintained a claim over the territory of Jordan.

With the Israeli army entering Jordanian territory, more and more Israeli right-wingers will suddenly



remember the refrain which Menachem Begin and his followers used to sing in the old days: "The Jordan River has two banks, one is ours, and the other as well." Already, settlers in the Gaza Strip raised the call for a "Greater Israel" including Jordan;³ the Techiya Party's leader, Ge'ulah Cohen — a Deputy Minister of the Shamir government — already stated in the Knesset: "If the Iraqis enter Jordan and our army goes after them, the territory should never be given back to King Hussein!"

The Likud never gave up totally the ideological claim for Jordan, elaborated by the original founder Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s and '30s. Ironically, this claim bears much resemblance to the Iraqi demands upon Kuwait which derive from the same period. In 1922, the British drew both the border separating Iraq from Kuwait and the one dividing Mandatory Palestine from the Emirate of Jordan. The Iraqi nationalists have, then and later, claimed that Kuwait is an artificial creation of colonialism, which should be reunited with the "Iraqi motherland". Using much the same phrasology, Jabotinsky — and later Menachem Begin — railed against "the amputation of Eastern Eretz Yisra'el (Jordan)."

Since the 1970s, the Jordanian claim was pushed very much to the background in the Likud propaganda, but never dropped entirely. Up to the present day the Likud statutes contain a paragraph stating that, under a Likud government, "the Israeli Defence Forces will strive, at the right moment, to liberate Eastern Eretz-Yisra'el."

When the fat is in the Jordanian fire, the danger of mass deportation of West Bank Palestinians would inevitably come closer. The idea of "transfer" is quite widespread, far beyond Rehav'am Ze'evy's "Moledet" Party which openly advocates it. Yuval Ne'eman of the rival right-wing party Techiya disagrees with Ze'evi only because "such things should not be talked about, they should just be done when the time comes". Ne'eman is the new government's Energy Minister, and his attitude is known to be shared by several of its Likud members.

During the present crisis, an unnamed aide of Prime Minister Shamir was quoted in *Ha'aretz* as saying: "If we have war with Iraq and the Arabs make trouble behind our lines, they will soon find themselves outside". Indeed, the proponents of "transfer" have always known that their design requires war to be implemented — a major war which would create a feeling of national unity and absorb all the media attention. From their point of view, the United States becoming involved in a Gulf war is even more of a windfall, since it would distract public attention not only inside, but also outside, Israel.

The peace movement is preparing itself. Yesh G'vul activists, who as reserve soldiers refused to serve in Lebanon, or to serve the occupation, are nowadays discussing ways in which mass deportations could effectively be opposed. And the wisdom of the "Arens-Sarid National Consensus" is more and more openly doubted.

On August 26, the editorial of Mapam's newspaper *Al-Hamishmar* stated: "In certain circles, a concern is felt about the



Israeli troops attack Palestinians

possibility of large Iraqi forces entering Jordan...The talk about drawing a line in the sand' is firing the imagination of those who want to go back to '67 and conquer, this time, the East Bank of the Jordan River...If only minor Iraqi forces enter Jordan, Israel should swallow' the provocation and not go to war. It is, after all, unlikely that Iraq will risk opening a second front."

"Over the past two years an extensive network of political and personal contacts has been built between a wide range of Israelis and the PLO".

Over the past two years an extensive network of political and personal contacts have been built between a wide range of Israelis and the PLO. Since the PLO's recognition of Israel, in December 1988, the whole Zionist left became involved in meetings with PLO representatives and Palestinian

leaders of the Occupied Territories. In these meetings, agreement was soon reached on most components of the proposed solution, and discussion mainly turned on how to get the general Israeli public — and the government — to agree as well.

Three days after the invasion of Kuwait, a major Israeli-Palestinian meeting took place at the Notre Dame Hostel, on the border between East and West Jerusalem. On the Israeli side were 15 Knesset members, including all ten KMs of Mapam, Ratz and Shinuy, as well as five Laborites; the 12 Palestinians were among the foremost leaders in the Occupied Territories.

The issue of the Kuwait events featured prominently in the discussion with the Israelis strongly condemning Iraq and the Palestinians holding to a more general "condemnation of any military occupation anywhere". Although the participants did not succeed in formulating a definitive statement, signed by all, they did produce "guidelines" to be elaborated in further meetings.

In these guidelines, the recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination is accepted as being based on the UN Charter and the 1960 General Assembly Resolution condemning colonialism. At the conclusion, KM Yossi Sarid told the press that the conference was "an outstanding success", and that "if it was up to the participants in this conference, peace would soon be achieved" (*Ha'aretz*, 6 August 1990). Peace Now, in close cooperation with the Palestinian leaders, was busy organising a mass peace petition — to be widely circulated among the Israeli and Palestinian public.

On the day after, the bodies of

two Jewish boys, stabbed to death, were found in Jerusalem. As usual in such cases, the murderers were — ahead of any proof — generally assumed to be Palestinians. While racist mobs ran amok through the streets of Jerusalem, the participants of the Notre-Dame Conference found themselves on the defensive. Furiously rebutting the accusation of "having encouraged the murderers", several of the left-wing MKs did feel compelled to denounce the Palestinian leadership for "not condemning strongly enough the murders".

Meanwhile, the anti-Arab mobs did not need encouragement to continue stoning and burning Arab cars and beating up their passengers — with the police present and doing nothing. Dozens of Palestinians who happened to fall into their hands (as well as two Pakistani tourists) had to be hospitalised; one Palestinian died of his wounds.

Some individuals tried to stem the tide: an army officer — on leave from service in the Gaza Strip — tried to prevent an Arab from being assaulted, and was assaulted himself. Avi Alzam, head of the Shmu'el Hanavi Neighbourhood Council, was stabbed after calling upon his neighbours to stop attacking Arabs.

The peace movement as a whole was in shock. The Jerusalem peace groups started to organise a kind of fire-brigade for future events of this kind, but these preparations were not in time to help the Palestinians attacked on this present occasion.

It was during these same days of horror and outrage that, throughout the Occupied Territories, demonstrations broke out in support of Saddam Hussein; Iraqi flags were carried with the

Palestinian ones, and in some places the slogan "Saddam, be quick with your gas!" was heard. The groundswell in favour of Saddam reached also many of the Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship. A Nazareth inhabitant told the *Jerusalem Post* (10 August 1990):

"There is a sense of wanting revenge for this [the Jerusalem pogroms] and all of their suffering and grievances. They believe that Saddam Hussein will supply the means of their retaliation."

These feelings also found expression on the organised political level. KM Abd-el-Wahab Darawsha, heading the Arab Democratic Party, went as far as taking radical Pan-Arab positions: "The unity between Iraq and Kuwait is a positive step on the road to a comprehensive Arab unity...There are 21 Arab states; that number should be reduced to five or six, eliminating wasteful regimes. Should Yemen conquer Oman, or Egypt conquer Libya, we will support it." (*Yediot Aharonot*, 17 August 1990)

By taking this position, former Israeli Labor Party KM Darawsha went far beyond the positions of the PLO, which never included support for the annexation of Kuwait. Many journalists, however, presented Darawsha's positions as those of the whole Palestinian people.

Columnist Yaron London, hitherto a supporter of dialogue with the PLO, came out with the conclusion that the Palestinians do not really want to have a state for themselves, but merely want to be swallowed up in a giant Pan-Arab state; therefore, no question of self-determination is involved.

At the level of party politics, the first denunciation of the Palestinian leadership came from Mapam chairperson El'azar Granot, who accused the PLO of "having joined the terror alliance of the rulers of Iraq and Libya", he stated that Mapam will think twice about participating in meetings and conventions with Palestinians unless the PLO changes its position (*Jerusalem Post*, 12 August 1990). However, he left a possible line of retreat open, telling in a radio interview: "I still have my contacts inside the PLO, quite high in the hierarchy. They tell me that the PLO is having second thoughts."

KM Yossi Sarid went further; on August 17 he published an article in *Ha'aretz* entitled 'Let them try to find me'. He announced in it the total breaking off of his contacts with "Arafat, Hussein and Darawsha" — ie. with all Palestinians, whether exiled, Occupied Territories inhabitants, or Israeli citizens. Yossi Sarid — always considered one of Israel's foremost "media acrobats" — dominated the news for about a week, but his achievement soon started to work against him.

The right wing was quick to seize upon "the confessions of the left-wing penitents" (as KM Geula Cohen put it). The 'Molede' Party published a leaflet congratulating "the leftists who have at last woken up". Deputy Foreign Minister Binyamin Netanyahu ordered Sarid's article translated into English and distributed by Israeli embassies.

This atmosphere may have encouraged Attorney-General Charish in his decision to request the removal of parliamentary immunity from Progressive List for Peace KM Muhammed Miari, in order to have him prosecuted for meeting PLO members at Athens in February 1988.

"Meanwhile the anti-Arab mobs did not need encouragement to continue stoning and burning Arab cars and beating up their passengers — with the police present and doing nothing".

However, the atmosphere quickly began to change, with the great majority of the peace camp rallying in defence of continued dialogue with the PLO. *Hadashot* columnist Yehuda Litani called Sarid's emotional action "a reaction benefitting a child, but not a political leader" (21 August 1990). He was followed by numerous others who came out against Sarid on their pages. Peace Now published 'An Open Letter to the Palestinian leadership in the Occupied Territories' which, while expressing "disappointment over the enthusiastic Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein", also praised the Palestinian leaders for their August 15 statement.

Israeli reactions to the Gulf crisis

From page 7

On that day Feisal Hussein and others called for the resolution of all conflicts through peaceful means and for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, and condemned all acquisitions of land by conquest. A Peace Now spokesperson, Amiram Gelblum, attacked Sarid directly, stating: "We do not want Arafat as a personal friend — we want him as a partner for peace. The only relevant question is whether he still wants peace...If Saddam Hussein himself should offer to open peace talks with Israel, there is room for that, too." (*Ha'aretz*, 28 August 1990)

According to some political observers, Sarid's new posture was motivated by a desire to return to the Labor Party, which he left in 1984 and where a struggle for the leadership has begun. However, Ya'el Dayan — a Labor Party member — was among his sharpest critics; Labor Doves Uzi Bar'am, Avraham Burg and Aryeh Eliav all reiterated their continuing conviction that there must be negotiations with the PLO (*Al-Hamishmar*, 17 August 1990); and even Labor leader Shimon Peres stated in a radio interview: "So there were demonstrations in support of Saddam! Ten years ago, there were demonstrations in favour of Humeini. Now Humeini is dead and we are still here. When the dust settles, we still have to make peace with these people."

On August 24 Sarid's critics were joined by writer AB Yehoshua, Sarid's personal friend and his ally in many previous controversies: "I telephoned Sarid and I think this was an emotional slip of the pen. I think he now regrets having written 'They can come and search for me!'. I can understand his emotional reaction, like I can understand the Palestinians who suddenly support Saddam Hussein, or like I understand the mobs who attacked Arabs in Jerusalem."

On August 26 the Ratz secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to negotiations with the PLO. Sarid remained isolated, with most members supporting the position of KM Shulamit Aloni:



Israeli schoolchildren with gas masks

"I think this [Sarid's statement] is an expression of distress. This distress has many causes, but a person must not let such feelings overwhelm him. A feeling of distress is not a justification for forgetting all rational thought, all long-term considerations. There are several things I have to say in this matter: first, I can make no accusations against the Palestinians; second, I cannot renounce the principle that every people has the right to self-determination; and third, I am willing to continue meeting them, always, every time. I am sure that, in the end, my colleagues will also agree that Israel's security needs require the continuation of that dialogue." (From an interview to *Ha'aretz*, 24 August 1990)

Two days later, a public Israeli-Palestinian meeting took place — the first, as all the papers noted, since Sarid's attack. Some 150 inhabitants of the Arab town of Taibeh, in Israel's "Triangle" area, witnessed a public discussion between KM Dedi Zucker of Ratz,

Israeli Communist Party Secretary General Tufiq Tubi, and Radwan Abu-Ayash, one of the prominent members of the East Jerusalem Palestinian leadership.

On the same day, Communist KM Tamar Gozanski and Dr Ruhama Marton of the Israeli-Palestinian Physicians' Association met with Nabil Sha'ath, a senior Arafat advisor, in the context of the European NGO's Symposium on the Palestinian Question. Naturally, both meetings were mainly centred on the Gulf crisis and the two sides' relation to it. At the time of writing, Likud and Tehiya KMs have called for Tamar Gozanski to be prosecuted; on the other hand, Labor Knesset Members, led by KM Shevah Weiss, have declared their intention to oppose and obstruct the proceedings against PLP KM Miari.

In the first weeks of the Gulf crisis, the Zionist Left — together with the mainstream — gave uncritical support to the American military build-up in the Gulf, and to President Bush's declared policies. In the Hebrew press, there were but few and scattered dissenting voices; they deserve to be enumerated:

- The Communist Party, which supported sanctions on Iraq but opposed American military involvement;

- Yemini Ben-Dror, editor of the radical Oriental Jewish monthly *Hapatish*, who wrote in *Yediot Aharonot* (15 August): "What Saddam did to the Kurds is much more serious than what he is doing to the Kuwaitis, but then the world was silent";

- Uri Avnery, who, in an article in *Ha'aretz* (21 August), called for democratic elections in Kuwait, and condemned Mapam and Ratz for supporting American demands to restore the corrupt old Kuwaiti regime;

- The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which published an advertisement stating: "...The Kuwaiti Crisis should be solved peacefully, without a flare-up which could set the whole Middle East on fire" (*Ha'aretz*, 17 August);

- Yossi Dahan, who exposed the lies and hypocrisies on both sides of the Gulf battle-lines: "In war the first casualty is always the truth" (*Hadashot*, 19 August).

As long as the outbreak of war seemed imminent, most Israelis prepared to sit back and watch the Americans destroy Iraq's military and nuclear capacity. "The Americans clean up the mess, and our hands stay clean!" These were the words of Police Minister Roni Milo, and they hit the point for a

very broad section of society.

However, in the last week of August this dream seemed to recede, and Iraqi withdrawal through diplomatic mediation became a realistic possibility. Such an outcome would, among other things, create a precedent of an occupied territory evacuated under international pressure.

In *Ha'aretz* Yoel Markus started to beat the war drum: "George Bush, President and Commander in Chief, must give immediately the green light for the destruction of Saddam Hussein" (August 28).

Dan Margalit, who counts himself among the doves, wrote in his column: "There must be no mediation and no negotiations... Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, under the doubtful auspices of the UN, will make the situation much worse...President Bush must give Saddam only two choices: to withdraw from Kuwait and resign from power...or face trial for war crimes." (*Ha'aretz*, 27 August)

Former General Avigdor Ben-Gal waded in, calling upon the US to use "tactical, non-polluting nuclear arms".

"In B'ney B'rat, north of Tel Aviv, a shantytown was destroyed with much brutality. The homeless are becoming increasingly bitter and alienated..."

On August 29, columnist Gideon Samet wrote a fiery rebuttal: "Starting a war seems a simple matter for newspaper columnists and former generals. Thank God, it is more difficult for the one who has to push the button...War is a very unpredictable thing. It never develops as it was presented at the General Staff's computer games...I beg forgiveness of all these heroes. I hereby inscribe myself among the decadent cowards, who regard war as a bad idea — even a war against today's Bad Guy Number One."

This struggle on the pages of *Ha'aretz* probably reflected governmental machinations, which came to light only in the form of Shamir's denial on August 28: "The accusations that we are pushing the US into war are nothing but ridiculous

lies."

Among Saddam Hussein's first Israeli victims were the new homeless, those who lost their houses after the boom in rents due to the influx of Soviet immigrants — and therefore created shantytowns and "tent cities" all over the country. The invasion of Kuwait moved the media spotlight away from the homeless encampments.

Knesset Members and Ministers ceased to come and promise quick solutions: instead, the police started raiding the tent cities and arresting the organisers. In B'ney B'rat, north of Tel Aviv, a shantytown was destroyed with much brutality. The homeless are becoming increasingly bitter and alienated; some went as far as applying to UNWRA to ask for refugee status.

The movement is far from broken, as was shown in its rally on Tel Aviv's Municipality Square on August 18, in which thousands of supporters came to show solidarity. The many leftists present had an experience different from their long history of rallies in the same place: the music between the speeches of the tent city representatives was oriental...

Another news item relegated to the back pages was the recent rise of Israeli unemployment figures above the 10% mark. It is far from certain that the government will succeed in containing such explosive social problems after the dust from the Gulf settles down.

1. During his first term at the Defence Ministry (1984-'84), Arens was the godfather of the IAI's Lavi Aircraft Project, and resigned from the government in protest at the Lavi Project's termination. On resuming the Defence portfolio in 1990, Arens tried to get Washington to finance the Lavi's revival. Upon failing, he now concentrates upon the IAI's 'Arrow', an anti-missile-missile which constitutes part of the American Strategic Defence Initiative, better known as "Star Wars".

2. In fact, Israeli governments since the 1950s were opposed to the entry of Iraqi or Syrian forces into Jordanian territory. However, this policy was never, until now, proclaimed in public. Moreover, between 1967 and 1970, considerable Iraqi forces were present in Jordan, and Israel did not start a war to evict them.

3. "We pray to the Lord to make our land bigger, so that a great many more Jews can come and live wherever our feet touch the ground. The whole of the Jordan River will be inside our Eretz-Yisra'el. It will be a holiday resort where we could swim from one side to the other, and both sides will be inside our country". This statement was published in *Oz*, the (government-funded) weekly magazine of the Gaza Strip settlers, and reprinted in *Yediot Aharonot* on August 24.



Yitzhak Shamir

Concrete analysis or logic-chopping?

Gerry Bates replies to last week's letters on the Gulf

Tony Dorman and Stephen Ryaptis ask related questions about a socialist attitude to the Gulf crisis should it develop into an all-out war. Both say that the approach we adopt at the moment, opposition to both the imperialists and to Iraq, should be maintained.

Says Dorman: "It is not the business of socialists to help the younger robber to rob the older". And Ryaptis: "Surely it is in the nature of a younger imperialist power...to come into conflict with an ageing imperialist power."

Ryaptis also criticises SO for advocating "the unity of the Arab people" on the grounds that such unity would oppress national minorities.

The conflict began through a sub-imperialist gambit by Iraq, designed to assert its regional authority and seize control of Kuwait's rich oilfields. Iraq is certainly the "younger robber". But that is not the end of the story.

It is now difficult to imagine an end to the conflict that does not involve a concerted imperialist attempt, with or without UN approval, not only to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, but to remove him in Iraq. Already US military forces have established themselves as the effective dominant power in Saudi Arabia; state power in Iraq — that is, neo or semi-colonial power in a real sense, not the nebulous sense in which those words are widely used — could be the outcome of the endgame now being played.

Other scenarios are possible: it is even remotely conceivable that the US could do a deal with Saddam in which they agreed to fund him as the Gulf's policeman, although that looks very, very implausible at the moment.

But if the more likely scenario is right, we are, or will be, no longer talking about big robbers and small ones. We would be talking about a huge, imperialist, military presence in the region, sparking mass revolts across it, firing the justified hostility of millions of people. Saddam's sub-imperialist gambit would no longer be the main issue. If the war escalated to an attempt by the United States effectively to conquer Iraq, we would need to raise the argument for the defence of Iraq's national rights.

It is right to make historical comparisons, but important not to get bogged down in them. If Iraq were an imperialist power straightforwardly comparable to the US or Britain, competing for control of Middle East oil, even its overrunning by foreign armies would not make us "defencists". We were not defencists for France even when Nazi Germany conquered most of it.

This was not because we were unconcerned for the national rights of the French, but because the French bourgeoisie — de Gaulle — were not fighting for those national rights: they were fighting for the French empire.

Saddam Hussein's wild ambitions — who knows, perhaps he would like to be the new Hitler? — are not seriously comparable to the material reality of French colonialism. In reality, Iraq is a small, sparsely populated country which, if the world's imperialisms combined to smash it to bits, would be fighting not for the oil fields of Kuwait, and still less Saudi Arabia, but for its life as an independent nation.

At the moment, it has not escalated to such a level. Maybe it won't. Even if it did, socialists would remain implacably hostile to Saddam Hussein's regime. But we would not be impartial on the question of Iraqi national rights, and would not reduce the war as it had developed to the ambitions of the regime in its opening rounds.

Socialist Organiser has distinguished itself from the rest of the left by taking a concrete approach to recent wars.

When Britain went to war with Argentina in 1982, most of the Left saw everything in terms of abstract schemes. The terrestrial actions of mere mortals played no part in much of the Left's analysis. Galtieri's invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas was, they thought, a first — messy and reprehensible — step in an ineluctable process of anti-imperialist revolution which would eventually result in socialism.

We argued that it was a conflict in reality confined to the islands. There was no struggle on the Argentinian side we could support — no issue of national liberation. We opposed both sides.

When the US sent ships to the Gulf in 1987 to back Iraq against Iran, we argued that Iranian national rights were not being threatened. The American aim was 'containment', not conquest. And this is not a matter of speculation. We were proved 100% right. Khomeini's regime, if not the old bastard himself, is still intact and the US is satisfied if not overjoyed.

In both cases we said that if the conflict escalated beyond the immediate issues, and national rights were at stake, we would be for the defence of Argentina or Iran. We said such an escalation was very unlikely.

But such an escalation now is very likely. It is almost unimaginable that the issue will remain confined to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. We are talking a much bigger ball game.

It is true that socialists don't change sides in war just because one side is weaker. If it really remained an issue of imperialism versus sub-imperialism, there would be no case for taking sides. But only by the most arid series of logical deductions can it be believed that it will remain that. If war starts, it will be bigger than Saddam Hussein. A massive wave of nationalism is already gripping the region.

Dorman says that we should not "help the younger robber to rob the older robbers"; Ryaptis, that even imperialist nations can suffer foreign occupation and oppression, and that "whatever the level of conflict, or whatever the location of the fighting, the nature of the conflict would remain unchanged..."

They argue far too abstractly. At that level of abstraction, why support Vietnam against the US? Vietnamese victory led to Vietnamese domination over Laos and Cambodia. Why support Algeria's war of independence against France? Independent Algeria has oppressed the Berbers. Why support Egypt against Britain, France and Israel in the Suez crisis? Nasser's victorious government went on to establish a sort of sub-imperialist domination over Syria and North Yemen.

Every capitalist (or Stalinist) ruling class, however weak, has imperialist impulses. Every war between capitalist (or Stalinist-bureaucratic) forces has elements of an inter-imperialist conflict. Follow the logic of Dorman and Ryaptis, and we would never support any nationalist struggle. We would have to regard the principle of national self-determination as futile and play with words, without any possible grip on reality in a capitalist (and Stalinist) world.

In fact we must analyse concretely. In fact we must distinguish bet-

ween conflicts where national self-determination is the main issue, and ones where inter-imperialist rivalry is the main issue.

War is the continuation of policy by other means. Iraq is continuing a policy of trying to establish itself as a big power in its small region. The US and Britain are continuing a nearly 200 year old policy of trying to keep that region under their direct control or the control of forces they consider safe.

In the event of a full-scale assault on Iraq by the US and its allies, aimed at disabling Iraq from ever again upsetting regional stability, Kuwait would become a secondary issue and the main issue would be Iraqi self-determination.

The approach of Dorman and Ryaptis is the flipside of the approach of (for example) *Socialist Worker*. *SW* dissolves all concrete issues into the issue of the inequality of power between America ("the main enemy") and Iraq ("objectively anti-imperialist"); Dorman and Ryaptis dissolve concrete issues into the inter-imperialist aspect of the conflict.

Ryaptis also raises the question of the character of Arab nationalism. I am extremely sceptical about Arab nationalism. It is a nationalist tradition surely near the end of its tether, after decades of failure. Nationalism has failed to secure any of its objectives; not Arab unity, not economic prosperity, and not a solution to the Palestinian question.

Part of Saddam's current appeal, certainly among Palestinians, is that he is reasserting an old, militant nationalism against the failure of the 'moderates' to get anything through negotiations. He is, incidentally, in one respect therefore Israel's creature, the Frankenstein's monster of their intransigence.

Nothing would please me more than to see the final demise of Arab nationalism and its mythologies, to be replaced by a socialist internationalism.

But is it a socialist attitude to the masses simply to decry their "false consciousness"?

Sometimes, if the consciousness is just false, it is. It is false for white workers to believe black workers are their enemies. It was false for British workers to believe it was in their interests to bash the Argies in 1982. It was false for Argentinian workers to believe that the Falkland/Malvinas islands were worth a single drop of their blood.

But if the Arab masses mobilise against a colossal imperialist military presence in their region? We want a massive mobilisation against the imperialist military presence. Not led by Saddam Hussein; against him, better without him. But we surely don't believe that the mobilisation is simply reactionary, simply part of Saddam's war effort.

In my view, only socialist revolution will achieve Arab unity. But it is ridiculous to say that Arab unity as such is bad for national minorities. Obviously, we're for an Arab unity that allows the Kurds, Israelis, etc., the right to self-determination. Presumably we were for the unity of pre-Maoist China; but we should not have been for the conquest of Tibet.

The big danger in the nationalist wave obviously gathering strength in the Arab world is that it will be absorbed more and more by Islamic fundamentalists. Saddam Hussein's sub-imperialist adventure may turn out to be the last gasp of pseudo-secular nationalism. Especially in Saudi Arabia, where the American presence must be provoking immense hostility, fundamentalism must be a real danger.

Surely we assist the fundamentalists if we declare the whole unfolding conflict to be nothing more significant than the previous US



This cartoon from a US paper parodies a famous photo of US troops raising the American flag on a reconquered island in World War 2

military build up, in 1987, in Saddam Hussein's support. It is much more significant than that. The Middle East is about to be completely reshaped.

For the moment, it has not escalated. But I can't believe — though I'd like to — that it won't. And as it escalates, the issue of Iraq (and for that matter Arabian, Jordanian, who knows?) national rights will become more and more relevant. That won't mean that Kurdish national rights don't matter, or that we show Saddam Hussein an olive branch. But it must mean we are for Iraq's defence.

Ryaptis also raises the question of "self-determination for Kuwait", saying that we should be for it; Tim Wilding, however, argues that we should drop the slogan "Iraq out of Kuwait".

Wilding jumps too far ahead. A big US assault on Iraq is possible, even probable. But it has not happened yet, and it is not certain. If and when that assault comes, Kuwait will become a secondary issue. But it is not now. Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait would, at the very least, strip many of the US's allies away from it, and make it very difficult for the US to invade Iraq.

Women in Black

LETTERS

As Saddam Hussein and the occupation of Kuwait grips the headlines everyone forgets the other occupation — now 23 years old — of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel.

Every Saturday for over two years **Women in Black** has held a vigil outside the offices of El Al, Regent Street, London W1 to call for the end of the Occupation, an end to the killings, the brutalities, the deportations. **Women in Black** desperately needs more women, more voices, more of a presence.

It is a non-sectarian group of women who agree on a minimum programme: the end of the Occupation, the recognition of the PLO, the right to self-determination and independence for the Palestinians and a boycott of Israeli goods.

Women in Black dress in black to remember those who have died at the hands of the Israeli forces and to show solidarity with Israeli and Palestinian women who hold similar protests in thirty-one places across Israel. **Women in Black** is now an international movement of

It's unlikely that resistance in Kuwait or in Iraq can force Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait. But why should that stop us expressing our opposition to Iraq's military occupation?

Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait "without a shot being fired" would certainly be claimed as a victory by the US. But we do not just write a minus where Bush writes a plus. We side with Iraq's national rights against Bush. We do not side with Saddam's sub-imperialism against Bush.

So we are for Iraq getting out of Kuwait, which means that we are for the people in Kuwait deciding their own future. You could call that "self-determination" but it is not the general principle of self-determination of nations.

The Kuwaitis are not a nation, they are a rentier caste. The people living in Kuwait are not a coherent community which could sustain a viable democracy, socialist or bourgeois; they are a rentier caste, plus a certain number of long-term resident migrant workers, plus a very large floating population of short-term contract workers. Any long-term democratic solution must mean the inclusion of Kuwait in some larger democratic unit.

solidarity stretching from Australia, across the USA and Europe.

Our vigil lasts from four till five each Saturday afternoon, outside El Al offices. If you cannot spare one hour each week, just come when you can. For further details ring 071-249 9718.

Jenny Bourne
for Women in Black

Request for information

We are writing a history of the Labour Party in the eighties, from the perspective of rank and file members.

We would be interested in hearing from Party activists from all regions of the country about their experiences in the Party in recent years. In particular, we would be interested in any details about the effects on the Party's grass-roots of the policies and practices pursued by the Party's national leadership.

Confidentiality will be strictly respected and all correspondence will be answered.

Please write to us at 79 Inderwick Road, London N8 9LA.

Richard Heffernan
Mike Marqusee

Subverting myths of beauty

FILM

Edward Ellis reviews
'Cry Baby'

One of the most striking features of John Waters' film 'Cry Baby', like its predecessor, 'Hairspray', is that the conventional image of beauty is not the only one.

The lead character, the tearful hearthrob of the title is, for sure, somewhat aesthetically spectacular, a kind of youthful Elvis Presley clone. But even those who are, by normal movie standards, er...ugly, don't find it any sort of social or sexual drawback.

In 'Hairspray', the heroine was fat, but could have whichever man she chose. Hollywood's myths of beauty are chucked out of the window. In 'Cry Baby', there is an extraordinary looking woman called Hatchet Face, and Cry Baby's beloved grandparents, who are by most people's standards, I would have thought, a bit dirty. But the important thing is none of that. It's to have a good time.

'Cry Baby' is Waters' answer to those American teen movies about kids from the other side of the

tracks.

The town's youth (who are all, apparently, in the same year at High School), are divided into the Squares and the Drapes (rockers, I suppose). Cry Baby is a Drape — which means he spends his time driving dangerously, and singing rock and roll. He is, in a word, a delinquent. But the best kind.

The girl who loves him, naturally, is a Square, imprisoned in all those cute dresses and smalltown conventions, longing to let her hair down, but restricted by her stern grandmother and obnoxious fiancé.

Strong shades here of 'Grease'. As it happens, I recently saw 'Grease' again, and apart from the songs it really was awful. The story and dialogue were even worse than the average Saturday afternoon sitcom.

'Cry Baby', like 'Hairspray', wallows in the awfulness of its dialogue and corniness of its plot.

It seems to me, though, that it does have something to say. 'Hairspray' was set during the early days of the black civil rights movement. Its climax was an angry protest against a segregated dance competition.

'Cry Baby' isn't quite as explicit. But Cry Baby gets arrested (unfairly: the Squares attacked the Drapes, but the Drapes are poor, so they get



The kids are OK, says John Waters

blamed), and is badly treated in a prison where almost all the inmates are black.

'Cry Baby' is extremely similar to 'Hairspray', although Divine, bless him, obviously couldn't be in it

owing to his death. Two similar films are okay. If he makes a third it could get tedious.

Looking backwards

Vladimir Derer reflects on an exhibition he saw on a recent visit to Czechoslovakia

...Scoundrels, murderers, scum" were just a few of the epithets heard from visitors to an exhibition in Prague on Czechoslovakia's history since 1914. But most responded to what they saw.

The exhibition aims to fill in the 'white spaces' of this period: not only where there has been distortion and misinformation but also where during the Stalinist regime nothing at all was said. Two generations of Czechs and Slovaks which grew up under 'Communism' can now learn what happened in their own country during the last 75 years.

Crowds of people visit the exhibition every day. Nevertheless, only a small fraction of the population will ever be able to see it.

It is held in 'On the Moat' street, a pedestrian precinct on the edge of the Old Town. As well as a hall the street itself is used. Twenty 'Third-Man' type columns display copies of documents, press cuttings photographs and occasional comments.

The area covered is extensive, but of special interest are events which occurred under circumstances about which the Stalinist *ancien regime* preferred to remain silent, or the importance of which is played down.

Among these is the Prague rising of May 1945. At the end of the war, though German resistance was collapsing everywhere, Prague was still very firmly in Nazi hands. Despite this there was a spontaneous uprising. The desperate appeal for help to the Allies by the Czech National Committee is on display.

The ill-equipped Czech freedom fighters were no match for the experienced and well armed SS-troops. Aid would have made a difference but the appeal met with no response from the Allies.

Another 'episode' concerns the way in which German speaking

Czechoslovak citizens, mainly from the border districts (what the Nazis called Sudetenland) were 'shifted' to Germany after the war.

Pre-war Czechoslovakia had 3 million ethnic Germans whose ancestors had been there for 700 years. By no means all of these had supported or welcomed the Nazis, though many did, driven to despair by unemployment.

The emigre Czech government in London, with the full support of the Soviet Union, decided that the final solution of the nationalities' problem would be to 'transfer' them to the country of their 'origin'. On display is a photograph of a group of happy smiling people standing at the door of a railway truck, surrounded by plentiful baggage and personal belongings. This was intended to show the humane nature of the 'transfer'.

The comment below states: "The 15,000 victims beaten to death after the Prague uprising, the thousands of victims of the death march from Brno (30.5.1945), the approximately 10,000 who perished in Czech camps and prisons, and the further 100,000 tortured and raped who survived the genocide were certainly not smiling."

Several columns cover the political trials of the late '40s and early '50s. The names of victims of public trials are listed. Those who received little or no publicity during the posthumous 'rehabilitation' of leading Stalinists attracted the largest crowds.

The first show trial, with 13 accused, was in June 1950. Four of them, including a woman member of parliament were sentenced to death. Among the condemned was Zavis Kalandra, a former leading member of the Communist Party, an intellectual highly respected by younger members of the Party.

The Communist newspaper report quotes him as ending his own 'defence' as follows: "I started as an enemy of the Soviet Union. I betrayed the working class and now end having committed high treason and as a spy." The only 'crime' he was in fact guilty of is, that unlike so many others, in the 1930s he publicly denounced the Moscow

show trials of the Old Bolsheviks as a frame up.

The end columns are devoted to the last months of the 1968 'Prague Spring'. Then the exhibition moves to a building where documentary films from the Dubcek period are shown, including the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops, as well as the events of last year. The same films can be seen on videos in the windows of shops lining 'On the Moat' street.

The exhibition building is also used for discussion between members of the public and the press but along the walls each of the 23 parties which contested the election had a stall. Nearly all of them had election literature and most had someone in attendance. When I visited the exhibition the first time the Communist Party stall was empty. The second time I managed to pick up two rare copies of the CP's election manifesto.

Despite the mass of material, some 'white spaces' remain. Life under the First Republic is presented in idyllic terms. The Czechoslovakia's one million unemployed of the thirties, and its political consequences, are played

down. The 1938 massive protest demonstrations against the then government's decision to agree to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia — when any party prepared to defend the Czech people against fascism could have taken power — are hardly mentioned.

Left out also is the role of the 'Vlasov army' — recruited by the Germans from Russian prisoners of war — in saving the Prague insurgents and the US army's failure to do so because of the agreement

by the Allies that the liberation of Prague be reserved for the Red Army. The sorry tale of the gradual capitulation to Stalinism by President Benes and the representatives of the four non-Communist parties of the four non-Communist parties between 1945 and 1948 is passed over in silence.

Despite these shortcomings it is a tremendous relief that, at last, most of the truth is out. The validity of President Masaryk's motto 'Truth prevails' seems confirmed. Unfortunately for many, truth prevails too late.



Dubcek meets Soviet leaders prior to the Soviet invasion: 1968

The next batch...

TV

By Vicki Morris

TV have resuscitated 'Black Beauty'. BBC have revived 'The Generation Game', not much altered from the show last broadcast in 1978.

Having just returned from my holiday and being disinclined to dwell in the present, I watched it.

Brucie was the same except, as one would expect with the passage of the years, he has got more hair. Same professional unspontaneity, bean jokes and contempt for the contestants.

He made a couple of political

jokes too, which might have caused the audience to make a sharp intake of breath had they been more up to the minute. As it was, you could hear the audience politely struggling to recall the era stretching from Red Robbo to Red Ken which made the jokes intelligible.

Game show hostesses, mind you, have changed. No longer the obligatory blonde. A sassy brunette is now acceptable. What Linda Lusardi has done for the cause of women, eh?

I always found 'The Generation Game' boring: you have to sit through a lot of tedium for something humorous.

You can't say that it's grippingly competitive, or that you could join in at home. This time round you

couldn't even root for the winners to get all those lovely prizes since the conveyor belt bit of the programme was unceremoniously rushed.

In a couple of series' time, when they bring out a "Most sidesplittingly hilarious moments from..." episode I wouldn't turn over, but for now Bruce's new Generation Game is not, just as the old wasn't, even one of the programmes I love to hate.

Wouldn't you get irritated if you'd installed one of those ugly dishes to discover that you will soon be able to get ten times as much dress via a discreet cable under the floorboards? And my final thought for the week is: would you have Jessica Fletcher as a houseguest?

Looking forward to beer and sandwiches

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

It's been a long time since there was beer and sandwiches waiting for trade union leaders at 10 Downing Street. Eleven years, to be precise.

But now the General Secretaries can almost taste the Watney's and Dairy Lea and nothing, but nothing, is going to deprive them of it — least of all principles.

How times change! It seems like only yesterday that Bill Jordan and John Edmonds were writing off Neil Kinnock as a no-hoper and plotting to replace him with the more "statesman-like" John Smith. Now, Kinnock can do no wrong, and the accepted TUC orthodoxy (opposed only by a few recalcitrants like Scargill and NALGO's Alan Jinkinson) is that getting The Boyo into No.10 is the movement's top priority, an imperative that must take precedence over all other considerations.

Of course, the General Secretaries

have had a hard time of it over the last decade: membership of TUC-affiliated unions is down from over 12 million in 1979 to 8.5 million today and it is still falling; unemployment, closures and Tory legislation have all taken their toll of union power; worst of all, the government won't even talk to them. Like a punch-drunk fighter who's taken one too many right hooks and now longs only for the bell, the TUC leadership is waiting for a general election.

All credit to NCU leader Tony Young, for spelling it out: Labour would not be elected if it supported a return to pre-1979 legislation, he stated during the debate on employment law: this is the beginning, the middle and the end of the General Council's case for falling into line with Labour's union law policy (which, of course, means accepting the bulk of the Tories' legislation).

NALGO's new General Secretary, Alan Jinkinson, has put down his marker as the next standard-bearer of the TUC left: his speech against the General Council "line" on employment law was a very assured performance, bolstered by the previous day's publication of a NALGO-commissioned MORI poll showing that fewer electors see unions as forces of industrial evil and a sizeable majority favouring a relaxation of anti-union laws.

Jinkinson argued that the General

Council position meant that unions were being asked to "throw out of the window policies they have determined over years. That makes a mockery of our domestic processes." Mr Jinkinson politely refrained from mentioning the living embodiment of that mockery, Ron Todd, who "interpreted" the TGWU's long-standing policy of opposition to all Tory union legislation by voting for both the General Council's position and NALGO's composite. Todd was joined in this memorable contortion by, amongst others, SOGAT's Brenda Dean, who seconded the General Council-backed Composite One, and had to be ordered to also vote for NALGO's Composite Two, by a heated SOGAT delegation meeting.

The final vote on employment law was remarkably close: the NALGO composite received 3,529,000 votes as against 4,404,000 for the General Council's position. The strength of the opposition must have shaken Labour's employment spokesman Tony Blair, who spent months lobbying General Secretaries in the hope of a walk-over on this issue. But he still crowed on about a "momentous" decision.

In contrast to the heat generated by the employment law debate, the week's other crucial decision passed very quietly: the General Council's Report con-

tained a section on Economic Policy that included "Setting the Bargaining Agenda" and "A New Agenda for Industry" (Agendas — especially "New" Agendas — are all the rage these days).

This was moved by John Edmonds, GMB General Secretary and leading TUC "intellectual". Mr Edmonds, together with his side-kick Alan Tuffin of the NCU, recently penned a snappy little pamphlet entitled (wait for it...) "A New Agenda: Bargaining for Prosperity in the 1990s". This pamphlet bears an uncanny resemblance to the General Council's proposals, including calls for a "National Economic Assessment" to be drawn up after tripartite discussions between government, the TUC and the CBI, increased centralisation of pay bargaining, and for most major pay negotiations to be concentrated into the first three months of the year, following the "Assessment". Messrs Edmonds and Tuffin insisted that their proposals had nothing whatsoever in common with an incomes policy, let alone any sort of Social Contract...but quite a few delegates (and even one or two General Secretaries, like Ken Gill of the MSF) were obviously not convinced.

The beer and sandwiches may not be quite ready yet, but John Edmonds is already at the head of the queue, paper plate and pint glass in hand.

Teachers need left unity!

By Liam Conway

Two major issues will continue to dominate the minds of teachers this year — jobs and salaries.

Last term saw the beginnings of a stir to action on the jobs front, with Barnsley leading the way. Barnsley's fight to defend jobs will need to be stepped up this term as more and more schools in more and more authorities find that lack of funds presents them with a major staffing crisis.

However, the term opens with the salaries question to the fore. Last week the NUT's National Executive issued its long awaited salaries memorandum for this November's special conference. The memorandum is based on a consultative exercise amongst members and in parts it certainly shows the frustration that many in the union have felt about the executive's do nothing strategy of recent times.

For a start the executive recognises that members want a pay rise that benefits the low paid most. Consequently, the claim includes a mixture of flat rate (£1500) and percentage (10%). This halfway house position is by no means satisfactory, and the left should continue to press for a straight flat rate claim. Nevertheless, it is a significant advance from the executive's total opposition to flat rate of last year. Indeed, only last Easter, one executive member made the bizarre suggestion that support for flat rate was equivalent to the medieval belief in a flat earth. He must have been very surprised to discover that the bulk of the membership were flat earthers too.

The acceptance of a flat rate element is, however, of little use unless it is backed up by a comprehensive programme of action. Alas, on this front the executive reverts to old ways with the line that strike action might be used "if and when appropriate".

With the financial constraints of the poll tax and LMS plus the guaranteed opposition of the government, a claim of £1500 plus 10% means an inevitable clash with the government, unless, of course, the claim is not a serious one.

By recognising that some action might be necessary, the leadership are hoping to win over the middle ground in the union, thereby putting off any action this side of the general election. The left must be well prepared for this, by proposing a campaign of escalating strike action plus a work-to-rule from the moment it is clear that our claim is getting nowhere. The left must also present a united front at the salaries conference and the local associations salaries meeting in Camden this coming Saturday presents the ideal opportunity to forge such unity.

Local Associations Salaries Conference
September 15, 11 am,
Camden Town Hall Judd Street, London, N1

Unofficial action has started again on the North Sea. This Wednesday 12 September the OILC has called a one-day strike in the southern sector mainly aimed at AMOCO.

This strike is conceived as a protest at AMOCO's safety record — only days ago a major disaster (an explosion, in fact) was avoided by oil workers who stuck to their guns and refused to follow management's potentially murderous orders.

The strike is also aimed at the oil contractors who are refusing to co-operate with the ballot.

Meanwhile, catering workers in the offshore industry have voted for all-out strike action over pay. The Aberdeen secretary of their union, Rail, Marine and Transport (RMT), Steve Todd, said a strike would quickly bite.

"It would bring operations in the North Sea to a standstill in a matter of hours. Our members' decision — by six to one — shows the level of discontent amongst offshore workers.

Debating all out action

By Peter Burton

About 150 oil workers met in the Mitchell Theatre in Glasgow on Thursday 6 September as part of what have become weekly meetings in Glasgow of the OILC.

OILC met in the midst of the impending ballots regarding whether the action became official or not.

Feelings ran high at the meeting with workers on the southern field arguing that the men were ready to go on all-out strike. The standing committee of the OILC, made up of rank and file oil workers, responded that central to the dispute was the maintenance of men on platforms to prevent BP using scab labour.

The position is now complex as there are now men sacked who cannot return to the platforms: that is, they are locked out and not on strike; 75% are "on the beach".

The OILC committee made it clear that the reinstatement of all sacked workers was a precondition for any negotiations, irrespective of the outcome of the ballot for union recognition.

An oil worker from the standing committee told SO: "Shell is the main target in the fight — wildcat strikes should be

allowed to develop. Everyone in this hall is eager to get back on the platforms — we're confident that we're going to win."

The OILC standing committee argued against an all-out strike stating that they had relevant information on the situa-

tion on every platform giving them more authority in relation to the timing of the sit-ins.

Send all money to OILC, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen. Tel: 0224 210228. Invite a speaker to address your meeting.

Aslef put the brakes on

The executive of the train drivers' union, Aslef, is to urge its members not to go on work-to-rule in protest at the jailing of the Purley crash driver.

Working to rule would mean not going through amber lights at full speed. But management and the union leadership's concerns for safety doesn't go that far.

Robert Morgan was jailed for six months for driving through automatic warnings. British Rail have refused to accept responsibility for the accident, although they view the system as "inherently unsafe".

Aslef leaders are pinning their hopes on a 'safety summit' with Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson. What they expect to get out of Parkinson is hard to imagine. Train drivers should vote for industrial action.

CPSA members start to fight back

By Mark Serwotka

Members of CPSA (the civil service clerical union) have struck recently in Cardiff, Leicester and Barnsley.

At Companies House in Cardiff, a year or more of "agency" status is now taking its toll. At least five clerical members have been sacked under the new stricter procedures. In the latest case, a well-known trade union activist was sacked for allegedly failing his probation.

CPSA members responded to that with a one-day strike last week.

Members of NUCPS, the higher grades union, narrowly lost a vote for similar action and were then threatened with the sack if they did not cross official CPSA picket lines.

Two days of strike at Barnsley DHSS over understaffing may be followed by an all-out strike. Their staffing crisis brought on by computerisation has now been conveniently ignored by the right wing union executive, who don't want a fight.

The membership have decided that enough is enough and have taken matters into their own hands.

Understaffing has also caused a dispute at Yeoman Street, DSS office in Leicester.

CPSA and NUCPS members are now into the third week of their strike.

Though officially backing the action, the union executive have threatened to withdraw strike pay should workers attempt to make the strike more effective

by spreading the action. Members in other offices have not been intimidated, and have already taken solidarity action.

TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

Greenwich: The four-month old strike in Greenwich is set to escalate. NALGO's National Executive have agreed to ballot Greenwich NALGO members in 'key' groups on indefinite strike action. The ballot of 5% of the branch means that over 100 new strikers are set to join the 160 already out.

Meanwhile, eight strikers are awaiting the outcome of disciplinary hearings. The most serious attempted victimisation is against union negotiator Tracy Sergeant: she has already been charged with gross misconduct.

If any Greenwich NALGO member is sacked, the National Executive has backed the local call for immediate strike action by the whole branch.

Liverpool: The strike in Liverpool City Council continues. 200 NALGO members are on indefinite strike over pay deduction. The council wants to dock

one fifth of the weekly wage for each week day on strike. NALGO is demanding deductions be on the basis of one seventh. **Hammersmith:** Hammersmith Council are victimising six shop stewards. The stewards are being disciplined for being on council property during the recent strike over racism. Following a Housing Departmental NALGO meeting a ballot for strike action to defend the six is being organised.

Kirklees Housing Benefit workers have been on strike for eight weeks in support of their demands for regrading. They are now receiving full strike pay from NALGO.

Lambeth environmental health workers took one-day strike action on 29 August. 300 NALGO members were involved in the action against redeployments caused by poll tax cuts. Workers are incensed that all those being targeted for redeployment are black.

Derbyshire Council are shutting 11 libraries and selling off paintings, including works by Rembrandt and Lowry, due to poll tax cuts.

It's none of their business!

WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary

I'm not surprised about summonses being taken out against Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield.

It was about not keeping adequate records. The attacks will continue. It's not just Arthur and Peter, it's an attack on the mineworkers' organisation, the NUM.

They can't expect us to give them a complete picture of all the union's activities during the strike and since. So long as Arthur and Peter (and miners that they have looked after in their interests, that should be enough).

When the authorities demand to know how every penny was spent we should tell them it's none of their business. If we have to be devious to survive, then we will be, and we don't have to explain to our enemies.

There is some kind of compromise being worked out in Paris. Although we have 130-150 sacked miners and real hardship, we are not in the middle of a strike. British mineworkers have got to

remember that the IMO represents miners all over the world. Wherever there are miners in the frontline, they should have first claim on the IMO's resources.

People should take an internationalist approach. It's all very well demanding that Arthur looks after British miners first, but we shouldn't want a compromise that satisfies us at the expense of other groups of mineworkers in struggle, whether African, Filipino or South American.

The priority has to be to support miners wherever they are in trouble or in struggle.

I was amazed that Denning actually said what he said about the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four and so on.

The press response is even more amazing. Many people are excusing him because he is a judge. They've missed the point.

The attack on John Brown is a deliberate attempt to undermine the English law which is based on the rule of law. The Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four, it reminds me of Germany in the 1930s.

We should be aware that top people not only think like this, they also dare to say it.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

This war is about oil

Tony Benn's speech in Parliament on 6 September

Let us not be told that the duty of the House of Commons is to unite behind whatever the Government of the day does, because that is not what the House is there to do. We are here to represent people and to contribute our own opinions as best we can.

I have no complaint of any speech made today about how we feel that the crisis should be handled.

I will use plain language. I fear that the United States has already decided that, when it is ready, it will create a pretext for a war. That is what I believe. I acquit the Foreign Secretary of being in that hawkish clan because, so far as one can penetrate the inscrutable corridors of power and the minds of their inhabitants, he seems to be a bit of a dove. But let me say this, too, without offence. Britain is a minor player in this game.

Troops out of the Gulf!

From front page

believe the answer is to begin to talk and to negotiate.

I am an old shop steward, and whenever I went into a battle, I made certain that I left a door ready to be opened. If you close the door behind you, sometimes you cannot get out of the situation.

I believe that we must have a door ready to be opened in the present situation — a door that will give Saddam Hussein some chance of saving some face, so that the problem can be solved by negotiation and not by war. If there is war, who knows where we shall end up? I do not know, and no-one else knows. Perhaps the war would be over quickly, like the Galtieri situation.

[Another MP asked him to give way.]

No, I am not giving way. This may well be my last speech in this House. I do not know.

We must talk in order to find a solution without going to war. I agree entirely that there should be no question of going to war unless that is agreed by the whole of the United Nations. We should all agree on that if we cannot agree on everything else.

The last point I want to make concerns the damn hypocrisy of

We have had a debate today as though everything hinged on whether the Prime Minister decided to go to war. The Prime Minister too is a minor player in this unfolding tragedy. She decided to go in with President Bush, perhaps because of the transatlantic relationship, the so-called "special relationship", or as thanks for the Falklands, or because she did not want to get mixed up with the EEC. But she is a minor player and once she and the Cabinet decided to commit even a notional number of forces — including the RAF and the RAF regiment and now the troops — she was locked into what President Bush intended to do.

It is important that we should not discuss, as if we were in a position to decide the post-cold-war order, what the Prime Minister will be doing here and there. We are a minor partner in an American strategy.

It must be known by now that I am opposed to a war against Iraq. I am opposed to action outside the United Nations. I believe that it would divide the Security Council. It might not exactly unite the Arab world, but it might bring many Arab countries together against us. The outcome of such a war could not be sure because President Saddam Hussein would certainly have the capacity, were he to choose to do it, to destroy so many oil installations that even though he himself might be destroyed it would

some of those involved. The Secretary of State for Defence says that we stand by the law.

What law did America call up when it invaded Grenada or Panama? What law did it call up when it undermined the elected president of Chile and helped to get him murdered? What law did it call up when it assisted the Contras in violent means against the Nicaraguan government? What sort of law is that?

That is not law; that is interests. That is imperial interests. What worries me is whether we are going to Saudi Arabia to fight for the rights of the Kuwaitis and the people of Iraq who have been oppressed for so long.

Where were Conservative members when the likes of me were working hard to assist those people? Selling weapons.

An American senator has said that if Iraq was only growing carrots, America would not be interested. Of course it would not be. It is a question of oil and oil interests. It is capitalist oil interests. It is imperialist oil interests.

That is what worries me. I want peace. I want the peoples to be free and genuinely free. I do not want us to be rushed into a war because of the oil companies.

inflict a burden on the world economy and the middle east which could not be contemplated.

I must also say something else to the House without in any way being offensive. Governments of any colour in any country are not the main practitioners of morality. America went into Panama and 3,000 people were killed. America went into Grenada. America supported Iraq when it attacked Iran. America did nothing when Cyprus was invaded and partitioned by Turkey. America has no moral authority any more than any other super-power.

The same would be true of the Soviet Union after Afghanistan, or wherever. It has no moral authority. Nor, might I add, because these things must be said and nobody else has said them, can we defend the Emir or the King of Saudi Arabia, neither of whom practice any democracy.

The offshore workers can win

By Tom Rigby

Oil workers are to be balloted over the coming weeks for an all-out official strike across the North Sea.

The aim of the action will be to enforce union recognition and basic health and safety standards.

The decision by the TUC and the seven national unions with members in the offshore industry to back this course of action is a result of the sustained and effective campaign waged by the rank and file based Offshore Industry Liaison Committee.

However, big problems remain. Most of the best militants in the industry will not get a vote because they have been victimised.

Humberide OILC chair Eric McTaggart explained: "The ballot is rigged. What kind of democracy is it when the employers say, 'you're sacked, you don't work for us any more, you're not in the industry any more — you can't vote'."

"If that wasn't bad enough, it's criminal that the official trade union leadership are going along with it.

"We have 2,000 men on the beach, sacked. The ballot will exclude them. The oil companies

Rush for emergency motions

By Martin Thomas (secretary, 'End the Ban!')



I am not saying that they are not entitled to the protection of the UN charter — I have already said that they are — but, given the denunciations of the breaches of human rights in eastern Europe by Ministers, one might have expected one of them, in this dispute, to point out that a person found guilty of shoplifting in Riyadh will have his hand chopped off. Are we to live in a world where morality is

Turn to page 2

As we go to press on Tuesday 11 September, seven organisations have passed emergency resolutions to the Labour Party Conference calling on the National Executive not to expel supporters of *Socialist Organiser*.

We need several dozen more to be sure of being able to force the platform into allowing a real debate at the Conference. We have 18 days in which to get them, before the Conference starts on Saturday 29 September.

So far Ealing Southall, Nottingham South, Peckham, Harlow, Honiton and Hyndburn CLPs, and the CRS Political Committee, have passed emergency motions. Many CLPs which have already pledged support against the ban on *SO* meet towards the end of the month, and should pass emergency motions then. And we are receiving messages from more and more CLPs each day.

Today, for example, we had a letter from Reigate CLP: "Would you please send a copy of *Socialist Organiser* as no member had seen it? Our members resented the action by the NEC".

The National Executive Committee voted to ban *Socialist Organiser* on 25 July. *SO* had had no notice of charges, no notice of evidence, no hearing. It had no official communication until Joyce Gould wrote to it on 1 August announcing the ban. Even then, Joyce Gould gave no clear reasons for the ban, and the very definition of the ban itself was scarcely even grammatical. (The NEC resolution says that *SO* is "ineligible for affiliation" to the Labour Party. But hundreds of thousands of members of the Labour Party are members of groups "ineligible for affiliation" — CND, Anti-Apartheid, and many others — and no-one wants to expel them all).

A new twist was added to the story by a letter to *SO* from Labour Party librarian John McTernan on 21 August. McTernan complained that the Labour Party HQ library had not been getting its subscription copy of *SO* since autumn 1989.

Apparently no-one had noticed until then! Between February this year and July, Labour's Director of Organisation, Joyce Gould, was supposed to be conducting an "investigation" into *SO* — but evidently she did not even bother to look at the Labour Party HQ library's file of the paper! Instead she provided the NEC with a smear-sheet, apparently derived from people in the leadership of Labour Students, which the NEC nodded through without giving *SO* any official opportunity to reply, comment, or even see the document.

The ban on *SO* is a threat to the whole of the Labour Left. The NEC has tried to push it through in near-secrecy, telling the press not to give it coverage because it is a petty matter, involving only a small group. They will want to get it through conference without debate, too. Labour's rank and file must not allow that; and the way to make sure there is a real debate is to flood the conference with emergency motions.

• Model emergency motion and other material available from 'End the Ban!', c/o 12a Canonbury Street, London N1 2TD.
• 'End the Ban!' will be running an ad in the Conference edition of *Tribune* with a list of organisations and individuals supporting the campaign against the ban. Please send in your name, or the name of your organisation; and also, if possible, a donation. The ad will cost £700.