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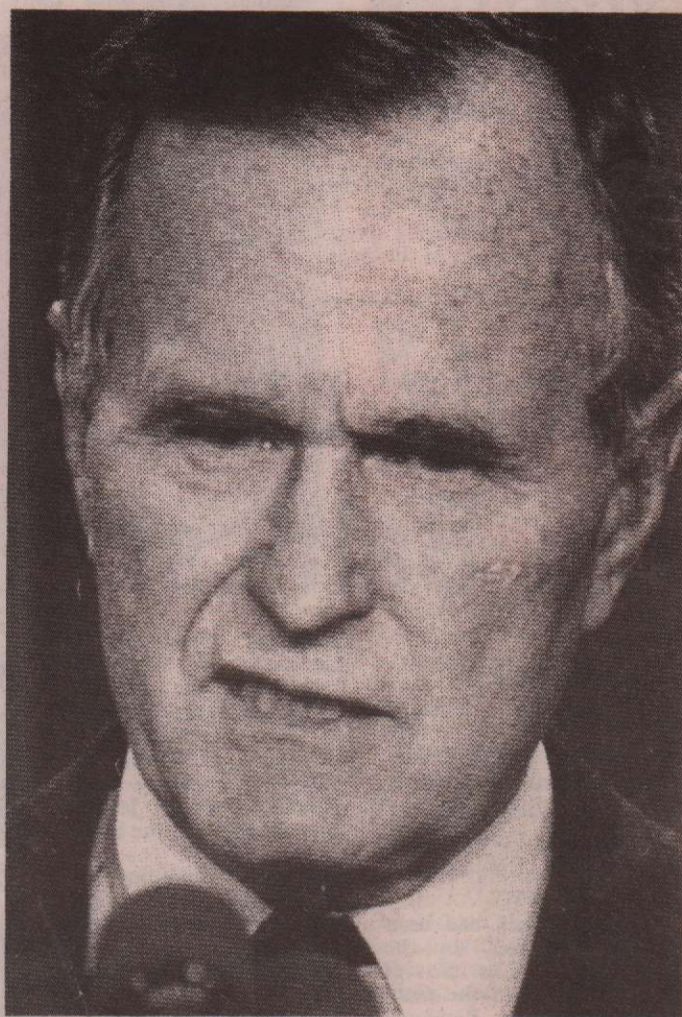
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home



Liars!

hypocrites!

murderers!

The idea that this will be a short, sharp war has already been shown up as absolutely unjustified. It is going to be a very bloody, and it could be a very long and drawn-out war.
The British people are not being told the truth about this war. The large-scale Allied bombing of Iraq has been used to cover over the grim reality that for the Allies to win victory in this war there must be large-scale casualties, and many thousands killed.
Thousands of ordinary people, including

By Eric Heffer MP

unknown thousands of men, women and children of Iraq will be killed.
It is quite shameful that in the House of Commons the Labour Party has taken the war-mongering line.
It is shameful that Labour Party people who spoke in the House of Commons against the war have been branded, and denounced by the press and by Tory politicians, as supporters of Saddam.

That is just not true! They are not supporting Saddam — they are opposing this murderous war. It is not the same thing.
I say it is an imperialist war! The labour movement must mobilise against it and fight to stop it.
Be in no doubt about it — people will mobilise to stop this war. War weariness will grow and the casualties will mount up, monstrosly, when the real fighting begins, army against army, on the ground.
Opposition to the war is bound to grow. Socialists must organise it.



Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

Why Wall Street cheered war

By Chris Reynolds

The market, whether stock, bond or super, is a barometer of civilisation," claimed Alex Brummer in the *Guardian*.

Last Thursday Wall Street opened with a minute's silence for the US troops in the Gulf. Then it whooped into a wild buying spree. There were huge cheers as the gains

on the Dow Jones Index topped 100, and trading ended with the second-biggest ever daily rise, 114.60.

There were no minutes of silence for the Iraqis — conscripted troops, or civilian children, women and men — killed by the US-Allied blitzkrieg.

Consistent supporters of capitalism have to believe that the financial markets are a distillation of civilised intelligence and rational

calculations — for it is the lurching and swaying of those markets that government investment, the provision that society makes today for tomorrow. According to many economists now highly influential, those markets in fact coordinate the available information about future prospects in a uniquely efficient way.

In fact they make a casino economy, an economy where human life is made secondary to the brutal disruptions, disturbances

and disproportions of a rat race for profit.

Share prices had fallen as war approached, because traders feared that the war would worsen the economic downturn already under way in the US, Britain and other major economies. Then the US government's first ecstatic reports of its bombing successes activated responses on Wall Street, and in other stock markets, conditioned (as Alex Brummer himself pointed out) by movies like *An Officer and*

a Gentleman and Top Gun.

The capitalists bought shares for the same reason that the editors of the *Daily Star* and the *Sun* wrote headlines like 'Bangdad' and 'Go get 'em, lads!'

The sudden rise in share prices almost certainly means a bigger, sharper fall in share prices when the war news turns sour, and following on that a bigger, more destructive economic downturn. That's how capitalism governs our lives.

Hands off the Baltics!

By Stan Crooke

Last Sunday (20 January) Soviet troops shot dead five people in the Latvian capital of Riga as they stormed the premises of the Latvian Interior Ministry.

Such an attack had been widely predicted. In the preceding weeks Soviet troops had seized the main press building in Riga, attacked a police station and two sets of barricades, shot dead a lorry driver, and stormed the police academy and confiscated its armoury.

At the same time the pro-Moscow Latvian Communist Party had stepped up its attacks on the elected Latvian

government, demanding its resignation, the dissolution of parliament, the cancelling of pro-independence legislation, and the transference of power to a Committee for Public Salvation (a self-appointed body of leading figures in the CP, the army, and the KGB).

In the week preceding last Sunday's attacks, this Committee had attempted to stir up unrest amongst the large Russian minority in Latvia (which has legitimate fears that it may suffer discrimination in an independent Latvia). Strikes and demonstrations were organised in opposition to the government, and the Committee announced over the radio its intention of taking all power into its own hands.

Similar events have occurred in recent weeks in the other Baltic states of Lithuania and Estonia.

In the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, 14 people were killed a fortnight ago when Soviet troops seized the city's television tower. Despite promises of no further military action, Soviet troops went on to occupy other buildings and set up road blocks and traffic checks at key road junctions in Vilnius.

In Estonia, especially in its capital Tallinn, pro-Moscow loyalists have organised strikes to demand the resignation of the government. According to one report, factory directors threatened their workers with the loss of their bonus payments if they failed to go on strike. Local Russian MPs are also on hunger strike in Tallinn, likewise demanding the Estonian government's resignation.

Broadcasts in Russian from an army base near



Barricades go up in Riga

Tallinn have called for the formation of 'battle groups' in preparation for the 'decisive moment', whilst pro-independence Estonians have barricaded parliament buildings to protect them from the kind of attacks launched in Vilnius and Riga.

The brutal clampdown in the Baltic states has provoked widespread condemnation in other parts of the Soviet Union.

Despite the size of such protests there is no mistaking the fact that the political pendulum in the Soviet Union is now swinging back towards authoritarian repression.

Army leaders are becoming increasingly outspoken in demanding a military clampdown, to preserve 'law and order'. "The patience of the military has its limits," warned the Soviet commander in the Baltic military district only a few days before last Sunday's events in Riga.

Soviet television is reverting to its old ways. Soviet soldiers involved in the attack in Vilnius have been portrayed as heroes "to whom statues will be erected in future years", whilst the overall situation in Lithuania has been portrayed as one of "dual power" between the elected government and the effectively non-existent Committee of National Salvation.

Gorbachev himself has been adopting an increasingly hardline approach. He has accused the Lithuanian government of 'gross violation' of the Soviet constitu-

tion, and has refused to condemn the killing of a fortnight ago. He has also accused Yeltsin of 'gross violations' of the constitution and

"Despite the size of such protests there is no mistaking the fact that the political pendulum in the Soviet Union is now swinging back towards authoritarian repression."

of 'political provocation', and has attacked the Latvian government in similar terms.

The coverage of events in

the Baltic states by the more liberal sections of the press has been singled out for particular attack by Gorbachev. He has proposed that the law on press freedom passed in the USSR last year be suspended, and that 'control of objectivity' [sic] be taken over by the Supreme Soviet.

Western governments have issued statements condemning the recent events in the Baltic states but, anxious to maintain Soviet support in the Gulf, their condemnations have been relatively low-key, despite the parallels between the Soviet government's behaviour in the Baltic states and the Iraqi government's behaviour in Kuwait.

The Gulf war is only in its early stages. It is already clear who has lost it: the Baltic states.

BBC bans Lennon



Lennon receives his MBE

Skilled writers of tragedy lace their work with light interludes to relieve tension. Whoever is writing the tragedy of the Gulf war knows the tricks of the trade: the BBC has just banned 70 songs for the duration of the war.

They include John Lennon's 'Imagine'.

The news from the Gulf is being censored, lies and fantasies are being pumped out as truth, so why should pop music escape?

There is good news though: the most disgusting show in television history 'Allo 'Allo is also off the air!

Anti-war action

Sheffield

In Sheffield the formation of a broad anti-war campaign is one step closer.

A resolution brought by members of the Campaign Against War in the Gulf received a positive hearing at the last Trades Council Peace Sub-Committee, which has been operating, up until now, as an 'umbrella group'. Whilst stressing the central role trade unions must play in an anti-war campaign, CAWG also pointed out the need to build a broad, democratically controlled anti-war movement.

The march on Saturday 26 in Sheffield will publicise the campaign and, if successful, could start to mobilise a massive anti-war movement in the city.

Fiona Monkman

Students

On Friday 18 January the National Union of Students NEC passed an emergency motion — proposed by Left Unity — to discuss the Gulf situation and action against the war.

The NEC retained Left Unity policy of US-British troops out of the Gulf and Iraq out of Kuwait. The standing policy of working with all genuine campaigns was kept — but in fact NUS has done very little to actively oppose the war and this policy has been ignored in practice.

The NEC refused to support the South Yorkshire Area-organised national student anti-war conference. The SWP and 'Labour Students' both spoke against supporting this initiative.

Left Unity supporters proposed a series of actions including a national NUS demonstration against the war. The Kinnockites and the right wing voted this down.

Mark Sandell (NUS NEC)

Stoke

"You've got the blood of innocent men, women and children on your hands," Stoke Central MP Mark Fisher was told when his Constituency Party discussed the Gulf war on Friday 18th.

Back in November, Fisher had said: "A bloodbath in the Gulf would be in nobody's interests". Now he squirms and wriggles, arguing that he voted with the Tory warmongers "for the UN resolution".

The GC meeting passed this resolution: "1. This CLP opposes the war for oil which has broken out in the Gulf, and demands that British and American troops are withdrawn from the Gulf. 2. This CLP demands that the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party oppose the war."

After the meeting Fisher's stiff upper lip was quivering with anger at those of us who argued for the withdrawal of British and American troops, as he spat witch-hunting venom.

Anna Mawson

War in the Gulf: issues for Labour

A Socialist Organiser pamphlet

75 pence plus 22 pence p&p from PO Box

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Photo: John Harris

Labour, democracy and the war

"The members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislation.

"Under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights."

Thus wrote the greatest scientific

thinker of the 20th century, Albert Einstein, in the course of explaining why he was against capitalism and wanted to replace it with socialism. He was explaining why he rejected the claim that a democracy like ours can ever be a properly functioning, that is a real, democracy.

Look around you now, if you need a fresh example of what Einstein had in mind. Britain is in a war that may last for many months, a war certain to cost many tens, and probably hundreds, of thousands of lives, large numbers of them British lives. This war may do unforeseeable damage to the environment, and it may dislocate the world's capitalist economy into chaos and the worst slump for 50 years.

Yet Britain has been hustled into this war with little serious discussion of the issues, and a discussion of war's likely consequences nothing short of grotesque in its disproportion to the probable human, economic and ecological results of war.

The House of Commons, let alone the electorate, has had no control over Britain's five month drift to war, in tow to a gung-ho US government.

In theory, the House of Commons does have control, and it could, in principle, have countermanded the government's decision to steer for war. But that theory covers the operation of a different House of Commons! This is the House of Commons where most MPs are, most of the time, mere puppets of the party machines.

This is the Britain of the *Sun* and

Star, with their obscene chauvinistic yelping and baying. The Britain of the *Guardian*, which opposed war, until war started, then switched sides. And, above all, it is the Britain of Neil Kinnock!

You can not have real discussion, real debate or real democracy where the main party of opposition does not — *dares* not — question or probe or debate or oppose. But that is how things are in Britain now. The Labour front bench dare not even be as independent as some right-wing politicians in the US are.

Kinnock and his friends dare not defend the rights of members of the Labour Party to disagree with this war. To vote against the government is to face instant dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet. They do not dare even to protest at the lynch-mob atmosphere being whipped up in Britain now by the high priests of gutter Toryism — the *Sun* and the *Star*. The *Sun*, usually fact-free, lists the 34 MPs: "34 MPs who won't back our boys". The *Mail* calls them "Labour's Desert Rats"! And listen to the demented jingoism of the *Star* denouncing the 34 Labour MPs who voted against the government last Monday (21 January):

"The 34 Labour MPs who voted against supporting our forces in the Gulf are a bunch of treacherous swine. For they have *betrayed* their country and their party.

"They have *betrayed* the men and women who are prepared to lay down their lives in the fight to rid the world of a tyrant. They have *slighted* the captured air crew who — right now — are being tortured

by Saddam Hussein and his butchers.

"*They do not deserve to sit in our respected Parliament. They should be kicked out on their ears*"...etc.

So much for free speech; so much for the freedom these blood-thirsty behind-the-line-heroes think Britain is fighting for in Kuwait!

So much for Neil Kinnock. Despite Kinnock, the labour movement — including those who support war — should speak out in defence of free speech, and in favour of the freedom to discuss the issues raised by the war.

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Over the top with the tabloids

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

By all accounts, government ministers and senior officials were not very happy about the over-the-top press coverage that followed last week's outbreak of war.

John Major is just as nasty a war-monger as his predecessor, but considerably more restrained in tone: definitely not a "Rejoice, rejoice!" sort of person.

The Grey Man even resisted the bait when a backbench backwoodsman invited him to denounce the BBC for referring to "British troops" rather than "our troops".

Considerations of style and taste apart, *why* are Major and his chums so anxious to distance themselves from the "Go get 'em boys"/ "Let's kick Saddam's ass" euphoria epitomised by the *Sun* and the *Star*? My guess (and it is only a guess) is that Major and his advisors have judged the prevalent mood rather better than the bar room Rambos who write editorials in the tabloids.

Major knows that a significant minority of the public don't support the war and that even people who do tend to be fairly reluctant and sombre about the whole business. An excessively gung-ho approach (especially one that encouraged expectations of a quick, easy victory) could very soon backfire in his face.

If I'm right about this, then surely Major will have already conveyed his displeasure to the proprietors and editors of the offending tabloids? And if he has, why haven't the *Sun* and the *Star* started toning things down? Could it be that macho posturing and martial voyeurism are so essential to the tabloids' very life-blood that restraint is impossible even when requested by the PM!

The most bizarre commentary on the war to date has not come from the *Sun* or the *Star* but from Sir Peregrine Worsthorne in the *Sunday Telegraph* of January 13th.

The piece is ostensibly an attack on television's tendency to trivialise war but running through it is a revolting and perverse analogy between war and sex: "making war has something in common with making love. Neither action looks as good as it feels"; "War is not evil, any more than sex is evil"; "The danger is that television, with its addiction to violence, will take all the terrible beauty out of war..."

Has Worsthorne, always something of an eccentric, finally cracked up entirely? Has his recent knighthood gone to his head? Or has this strange obsession been brought on by the old buffer's recent betrothal to Lady Lucinda Lambton of TV fame? It makes me feel quite sick.

A couple of weeks ago, I put in a mildly good word here for the *Guardian's* semi-opposition to the war-drive. I should have known better. On January 15th the self-styled voice of "calm dissent" came on side: "...So we must prepare for imminent war. The *Guardian* doesn't shrink from that..."

Never trust liberals.

"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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GRAFFITI

Stop Clause 25 and Para 16!



War, death and destruction is good news for the stock market

\$2 billion every day

GRAFFITI

The financial cost of the Gulf war to the US alone is now about \$2 billion a day.

Put it another way: every two days the US war machine spends as much as the total yearly income of the poorer 50 per cent of the population of Bangladesh — some 50-odd million people.

Every four days it spends as much as the total national income of Sudan, and every week as much as the total yearly income of Bangladesh.

Some seven and a half million people currently face starvation in Sudan. The flow of aid to them has been disrupted by the closure of ports because of the war, hindered because of the increased price of fuel, and threatened because the media's focus on the Gulf makes it difficult to rouse public and official opinion to get aid money.

If the \$2 billion of war spending were redirected to the starving of Sudan, they would all become rich beyond their wildest dreams, with \$250 to spend each day.

Not only stock market speculators and arms contractors stand to do well out of the war.

Hollywood film-makers are already racing to cash in. Roger Corman has rewritten the film *Shield of Honour*, which he is currently directing, to change the 'bad guys' from Libyans to Iraqis. Menahem Golan has changed the title of his new film from *SEALS* to *Desert Shield*, and switched the story so that it's about two US marines trying to destroy Iraqi missile stocks.

Films already made, and being released now, have had their publicity changed to key in to the Gulf war.

Britain is the only country in the world where there is an established and solid majority in favour of the Gulf war.

Despite all the talk of 'the international community' being united against Iraq, that is the conclusion of surveys in the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*.

Opinion polls in Germany show 80 per cent against the war — in Spain, 65 per cent, in France, 60 per cent, in Italy, 55 per cent, and so on. American polls have shown majorities for war, but smaller than in Britain.

Poll figures on the war vary widely according to the phrasing of the poll question, and it may well be that the gap between Britain and other countries will now close. The start of shooting has rallied public opinion to the flag in many countries, but anti-war feeling is

likely to rise faster in Britain and the US because they will suffer more casualties.

Nothing, however, is likely to take away from Neil Kinnock the distinction of being the most craven chauvinist in the international labour movement. Even the French socialists, who have sent French forces to help the US-led blitzkrieg, made some pretence of independent initiatives; but Kinnock's line throughout has been that anything Bush does is all right by him.

The government has spent £35 million in the last 25 years on 100 completely useless projects.

One town has 12 unused stations in its metro system. Elsewhere a vast arena stands empty, surrounded by a huge and almost empty housing estate.

Another story about the absurdities of the Stalinist command economy in the USSR? No: it's efficient, rational, capitalist Belgium.

Free enterprise in the US has done even better. Over the '80s it built hundreds of shopping malls and office blocks which now stand empty or uncompleted. Now-bankrupt Savings and Loans companies (the US equivalent of building societies) put money into such developments in the hope of quick profits from property speculation.

70 years ago, the Communist International warned that its call for support for national liberation struggles in the colonies and semi-colonies should not be interpreted as entailing any support for pan-Islamic movements.

The same message should have been hammered home to the left today by the record of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

However, there remain would-be Trotskyists who evidently consider that being revolutionary is defined by outbidding Saddam Hussein in anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and Islamic demagogy.

The 'International Workers' League' — a would-be Trotskyist grouping with sizeable support in Argentina — in the latest issue of its magazine *Correo Internacional*, produces a curious variant on the old Trotskyist slogan of a Socialist United States of the Middle East with self-determination for the national minorities of the region (Israeli Jews, Kurds). It advocates a 'Socialist Federation of Arab and Muslim countries' (emphasis added).

What this 'Socialist Islamic Empire' would offer to Israeli Jews can be gauged from *Correo Internacional's* official description of Israel as 'the Nazi-Zionist state' and 'an imperialist enclave'.

OUT AND PROUD

By Mark Holden

Lesbian and gay activists are experiencing a feeling of 'here we go again' as we prepare to campaign against a series of new legal assaults.

Anger has focused on Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill, discussed in committee in December of last year.

The Bill as a whole is an exercise in tightening up sentencing of 'persistent, violent and sexual offenders'. Clause 25 relates solely to gay offences and ranks three types of consenting, victimless behaviour alongside rape and child abuse.

These 'crimes' are already illegal but the Bill will give judges the power to pass longer sentences and inflict higher fines.

The three 'crimes' are: (1) Indecency between men: most often used to convict gay men for 'cottageing', ie. having sex in public toilets. It could also be used for any display of public affection, ie. kissing in the street.

(2) Solicitation by a man: picking somebody up, in other words. Chatting up a bloke in a bar, and exchanging phone numbers is to become a serious sex crime!

(3) Procuring of homosexual acts: could cover helping two men to have sex even if they are both over 21, eg. lending out a spare room, introducing someone to a friend.

Are people actually prosecuted for these crimes in the late 20th century? Yes, 3,000 men were convicted or cautioned for these 'offences' in 1989.

Clause 25 has emerged unscathed from the committee stage despite opposition from Labour and Tory members of the committee, and is due to be debated



15,000-strong demonstration against Clause 28 in 1988. This was just the start of the Tories' recriminalisation of homosexuality.

again in February.

As if that wasn't enough, the government has also issued new guidelines to the Children's Act. Paragraph 16 effectively bans lesbians and gay men from fostering children.

It states that "no one has a 'right' to be a foster parent. 'Equal rights' and 'gay rights' policies have no place in fostering services."

The singling-out of 'gay rights' is highly significant. Both the Health Minister Virginia Bottomley and arch-bigot Norman Tebbit have

both spoken out recently against lesbians and gay men fostering and adopting children.

Tebbit described the idea as "ramming homosexuality down children's throats".

Combined with the Embryology Bill's restrictions on access of lesbians to AID (artificial insemination by donor), lesbian and gay parenting rights are seriously under threat.

These attacks are consistent with the government's active homophobia of the last few years. The Tories felt

confident enough in the last election to attack lesbians and gay men on election hoardings to win votes. They introduced Section 28 to clamp down on the 'promotion of homosexuality'. These recent moves can be seen as another step towards the recriminalisation of homosexuality by the back door.

Already demonstrations and campaigns have got underway nationally and locally. Section 25 and Paragraph 16 must be defeated.

'In no sense our war'

WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

As *SO* goes to press, six families somewhere in Germany or England are holding vigils of hope for their sons, brothers, husbands or fathers.

These are the families of the six Tornado crews reported missing over Iraq.

Tomorrow, those families may learn that Daddy isn't coming home. The irreplaceable husband, father,

son, brother, friend will probably get a posthumous medal. His name will be carved on a war memorial in his home town. His wife will get a 'comforting' message from his commanding officer and a less than generous pension. If she and the children live on an airbase she will lose her home as well.

Despite John Major's promises Iraqi civilians are huddling in underground shelters while much of Baghdad goes up in flames. I'm afraid I don't believe that oil terminals are situated in 'central Baghdad' like it says on the news.

If the UN planes are, as they say they are, bombing central Baghdad, then it is civilian targets which are being hit.

Like Beirut, Baghdad is to be reduced to rubble. Already the population is suffering from shortages of water and fuel. Whatever the 'news' tells us, civilians must have died, and will continue

to die in escalating numbers.

The people of Israel are spending every night in air raid shelters or 'sealed rooms' wearing gas masks, waiting for the missiles to strike.

The consequences of this war will inevitably be much death and destruction, and ruined cities, and many ruined lives.

It is tempting to demand peace, and an end to all wars forever. In countries where women don't fight, they sit at home hoping that their men will return. In countries suffering night after night of bombing, women still have to worry about feeding the children and cleaning up the blood.

It is not true that women are 'naturally' more against war than men. If we are more emotional about senseless loss of lives we have struggled to bring into being it is probably because we are more emotional about lots of things. If Britain was

threatened by a foreign power, British women would probably be demanding guns. If it was civil war against our warmongering ruling class women would be fighting alongside men.

The point is that this is a stupid war from the point of view of ordinary women. It is in no sense 'our' war. Ordinary women's sons and husbands will be killed, thousands of miles from home so that American and British capitalists don't have to worry about the price of oil.

The lives of thousands of Arab women will be ruined for the same purpose. We have no quarrel with those women, any more than British soldiers have any argument with Iraqi soldiers.

I would far rather take up arms alongside Iraq men and women, and British soldiers to fight warmongers from both sides. That would truly be a 'just' war, and a war for real democracy.

War in the Gulf

The truth about this war

By John O'Mahony

Shortly before midnight on 16 January 1991 the US, Britain and their allies started to make war on Iraq.

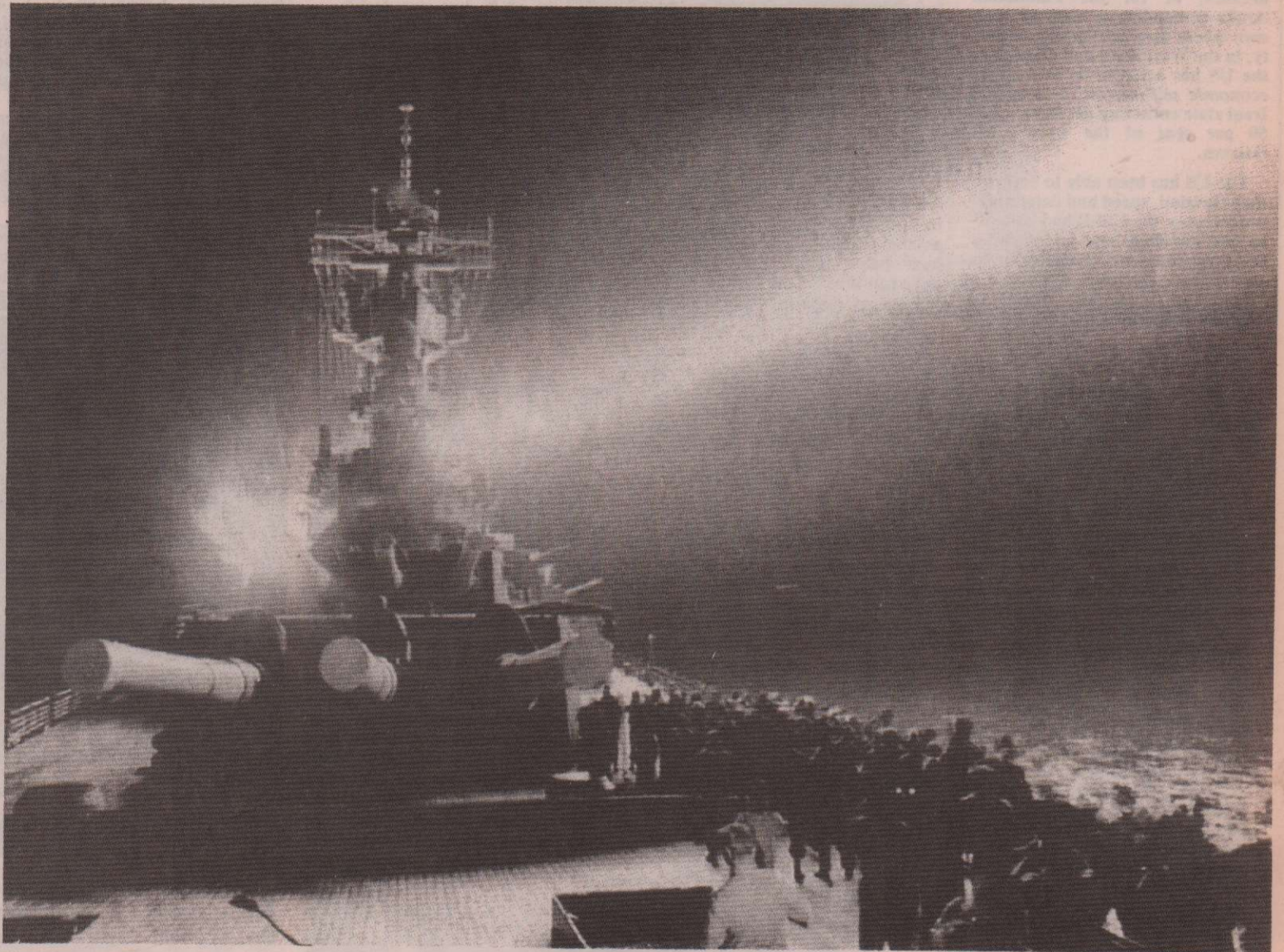
They blitzed Baghdad and other Iraqi centres. Five days later, as this is being written, Iraq has been bombed from the air over 8000 times, and raids are continuing. Iraq has sent rockets crashing down on Tel Aviv and Haifa, in non-combatant Israel.

Public utilities such as water and electricity have already been knocked out in Baghdad. The Allies claim that they are directing all their attacks clinically against military targets and power and communication centres, to avoid the deliberate killing of civilians.

In fact the destruction of the infrastructure of cities like Baghdad — water supply, for example — will quickly cause the deaths of unknown numbers of Iraqi civilians, apart from those directly killed by bombs. The Iraqi military casualties must run into thousands, and maybe tens of thousands, by now.

The bombing will go on for as long as the anti-Iraqi alliance thinks there is something worth bombing. Then the close-quarters fighting will begin. Nearly two million soldiers face each other now on Iraq's borders, one million of them Iraqi, three quarters of a million from the alliance.

The present vast Allied superiority, while the war is confined to the air, is expected to diminish dramatically when the land battles begin. The battle-hardening of Iraq's army cadre in the eight-year war with Iran will come into play in what may be the biggest land battles since the Second World War.



Warships sweep the Gulf

Inevitably casualties on both sides will be very high. The war may be prolonged and bloody. It may do to Kuwait, which the war is supposed to liberate, what was done to Korea by the US in 1950-3 when it fought to "save" it — flatten it.

The assault on Iraq is primarily a US war, but it goes under the banner of the United Nations, as did the war in Korea.

The proclaimed war aims of the

anti-Iraqi alliance have been expressed differently at different times in the last five months. They say now that their aim is to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, and that is all. At other times George Bush has proclaimed his aim to be the destruction of the Iraqi military machine and of Saddam Hussein's regime. In the House of Commons debates, Labour leader Neil Kinnock has seemed to accept the destruction of Iraq as the Allied war aim.

Many even of those who support the war, and give some credence to the higher-moral-ground-claiming war aim of "liberating" Kuwait also know very well that this is fundamentally a war for oil. "If Kuwait grew carrots, then there would be no war", is already a popular saying.

There is mass support for the war in Britain — 80 per cent, according to public opinion polls shortly after

the start of war — though in fact there has been very little real public debate in Britain about whether to go to war or about the likely consequences of the war that has now started. All the decisions were taken behind the closed doors and inside the magic circles of the ruling class — both the basic decision to tag along behind George Bush, and most of the corollary decisions.

Discussion in the House of Commons has been insufficient and late; MPs were faced with a fait accompli; and the Labour front bench played the same role of fawning accomplice to Major that Major plays to Bush.

The tabloid press has been baying for blood for months.

In the US, opposition to the war has been far more powerful. The Americans, after all, may have reaped some benefit from the Vietnam war and the mass opposition at home to it. The pro-war resolution

got through the Senate by a majority of only six votes.

With the outbreak of war, opinion has inevitably swelled behind "the national effort" and "our boys". Despite big demonstrations, the left is probably more isolated now than at any time since the crisis began last August.

The left will not remain isolated. Large-scale casualties are a certainty in all-out war with the Iraqi army; they may even, at a later stage, force the Government to attempt to bring back conscription. People will sober up; the anti-war left will begin to come into its own.

Right now the anti-war activists and socialists must devote themselves to patient argument and explanation, refuting the lies and distortions of the ruling class in this war. For it is a matter of shameless lies and distortions at every twist and turn on the road that has led to war.

Imperialism in Arabia

Western domination first arrived in Arabia in the early 19th century, when Britain began to build up control round the southern and eastern coasts of the peninsula.

By the end of the 19th century the British Empire controlled almost all those coasts, from Aden — the lynchpin of the system — at the south west corner, through Oman and a chain of small 'protectorates' to Kuwait.

Britain's motive was not oil, but control of the facilities for the sea route through the Suez Canal (completed in 1869) to the 'jewel in its crown', India.

Oil exploitation began before the First World War in Iran (under the control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, later BP) and Iraq (under the control of a consortium of British, French and later American companies).

After the war Britain and France carved up the Middle East. France took Syria and Lebanon. Britain took Palestine and Iraq; it already controlled Egypt.

Colonial or semi-colonial control continued until the 1950s in Iraq and Egypt, and until the '60s or '70s in the Gulf statelets.

Saudi Arabia

"The Saudi Arabian [women] you see," according to a report in the *Economist* magazine (8 February 1986), "are wrapped up like maize"; their faces, as well as their heads and bodies are covered.

"Saudi Arabian women do not go out, except to visit close friends and relatives or to shop — usually with a husband or brother...They are not allowed to drive...They do not meet men who are not their husbands, close relations or, oddly expatriates.

"Their marriages are arranged for them...Although polygamy is reckoned unfashionable, expensive and troublesome by smart Saudis, it is still practised.

"There is no cinema...theatre or music. The only forms of public entertainment are football and the public executions which happen most Fridays."

Not a new world order, but a war for oil

One of the most powerful ideas used by Bush, Major and their allies to justify the destruction — if "necessary" — of Iraq is the idea that this is a war for a better world order — for international law and an effective United Nations — like World War 1, this too, they almost say, is a "war to end war".

They say (sometimes) that it is a matter of the *United Nations* acting to deal with an aggressor before he gets too powerful.

The ideal of a world government

that can act to stop wars and right wrongs is an attractive one. But the UN isn't it; and if it were, there are wrongs far worse than the invasion of Kuwait for it to deal with. The plight of the Kurdish nation, which has been butchered for decades by Iran and Iraq, is a case in point. So is the Palestinian Arabs' demand for Israel to get out of the West Bank and Gaza.

The US has gone to war over Kuwait, not Kurdistan, Palestine, or Lithuania, because of oil — because it wants to keep as much control as it can of the oil supplies of the Gulf.

Why shouldn't the US stop Iraq cornering 50-odd per cent of the

world's oil? Why not indeed! Equally, in a world of power politics, why shouldn't Iraq try to corner it?

To condemn Saddam is not to approve Bush, and to condemn Bush is not to approve Saddam. The US acts here — despite all its pious words — as a player in the naked competition of states for power and resources.

US control of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait is a great deal more artificial, and against the grain of the local, Arab, people's wishes, than control by Arab Iraq. That is why Saddam Hussein has been able so successfully to appeal to millions of Arabs against the US attack.

The Gulf War: issues for Labour

United Nations sanctions cover for US aggression

The US acts not to defend "democracy" — there was no democracy in Kuwait! — nor to defend a small oppressed people.

It has never done anything for the Kurds who have been massacred by successive Baghdad regimes for decades, or for the Palestinian Arabs demanding a state of their own where they are the big majority, in the West Bank and Gaza. No, the US has acted in its own direct economic self-interest, to stop the Iraqi state cornering anything up to 50 per cent of the world's oil reserves.

The US has been able to act with such decision, speed and determination because the USSR had collapsed into the chaos and uncertainties of perestroika and the attempt to reintroduce capitalism. The USSR's

system of alliances — in which Iraq was important — had collapsed too, leaving a vacuum.

Now, as the US blitz is unleashed on Iraq and the world is preoccupied with the Gulf, the neo-Stalinists in the USSR are seizing their chance to crack down on the citizens of the Baltic republics — just as in 1956 the British-French-Israeli attack on Egypt was quickly followed by the Russian suppression of Hungary.

But the US has been able to bound forward as it has done because it beat the USSR in the Cold War. The old-style US imperialist braggadocio is the first fruit of that victory and of the US rulers' new feeling of strength. Far from history having reached its end in a stable bourgeois world order, as the gloating bourgeois pundits have been claiming, we seem to have run into a time bend!

The impressive United Nations majority backing the US action had essentially the same source — the collapse of the will of the rulers of the USSR to oppose the US, and the collapse of the alliance the USSR used to lead. Genuine horror at Saddam Hussein's aggression, and concern lest Iraq get a stranglehold on the world economy, were part of it, but not decisive. Among those who joined the UN majority were some of the most vile and repressive governments on earth.

Power politics, and the shift in the world balance in favour of the US, determined the UN vote. The US is using the UN as a figleaf, as it used the freak UN vote on Korea in 1950, when USSR had temporarily withdrawn and China was excluded.

Was the USSR's previous im-

perialist role therefore a good thing? No! Ask the napalmed victims in Afghanistan, or the peoples of Eastern Europe! But one imperialist bloc may inhibit another, and the USSR's collapse has given the US an immense new freedom.

Since August 1990, the US has set the pace at every stage, dragging the United Nations along behind it. The immediate American-British blockade of Iraq quickly went outside the terms of the United Nations resolution on sanctions. But the logic was there in the decision for sanctions.

Sanctions are either a mere token gesture, or they mean a full-scale, rigidly-enforced economic blockade. An economic blockade means military force to stop trade. It means war.

The sanctions against Iraq were always a different matter from sanctions against South Africa. The

sanctions against South Africa are a gesture, and no-one proposes a military blockade of South African ports, or other actions leading to war. And there is a mass movement in South Africa demanding sanctions against South Africa.

Starting with sanctions, the United Nations was dragged along behind the US, and now gives cover to what may become an American drive to bomb Iraq — like Cambodia before it — back into the Stone Age.

The UN's near-unanimity is not a first stage in the creation of an effective world government, but an accidental relation of forces which has allowed the US and its allies to use the authority of the UN to dress up their own interest. That relation of forces cannot last — and therefore the UN can not continue to play its present role for long either.

A new Vietnam?

The dupes of British and US propaganda insist that the US is not "occupying" the Gulf. It is engaged in a limited policing operation. It will soon withdraw.

Yet George Bush's advisers have openly talked about US troops continuing in Saudi Arabia into election year, 1992, and beyond.

The second of August, 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, may prove to have been a major turning point in world history.

The US, supported by the old imperial powers which controlled the various Arab states until the 1950s, responded by occupying part of Arabia, in a classic gunboat-imperialist move. They landed, and they make war, for now, at the invitation of the government of Saudi Arabia, and with the agreement and token support of other Arab governments. But that may quickly change.

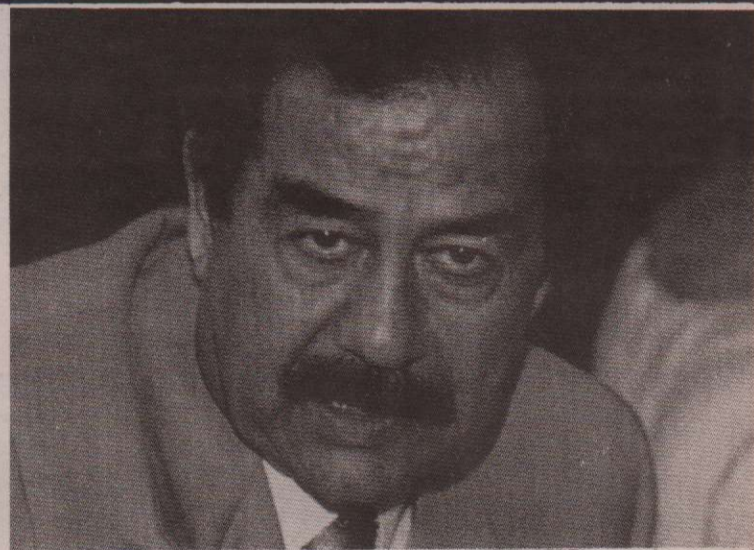
The oilfields of the Gulf are essential to the US, European and Japanese economies. Even in the "best" scenario it is unlikely that the occupation forces will leave quickly. They will want to secure guarantees for their victory.

Their presence will provoke active popular resistance and undermine the position of the unpopular feudal rulers of Saudi Arabia who invited them in. But they will stay, despite popular resistance and maybe guerrilla warfare against them — or else abandon this economically vital area to conditions worse than those they came to repair.

The US and its allies could find themselves in a Vietnam war situation — and with vital immediate economic interests at stake, as they never were in Indochina. Whatever happens in the war now being fought, it is very unlikely that this is just an episodic intervention like the US landings in Lebanon in 1958 and in 1983, or the brief British reoccupation of Kuwait to face down a threatened Iraqi invasion in 1961.



Vietnam casualty: "put other side next to wound"



Saddam Hussein

Iraq out of Kuwait!

Iraq invaded Kuwait because Iraq is almost bankrupt after waging an eight-year war against Iran for territory and prestige. In that war the West — and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia — helped to arm and finance Iraq.

Iraq seized the oil wealth in Kuwait as a means of escape from bankruptcy. Saddam may also have calculated that a new military enterprise was necessary to bolster his regime politically.

Socialists should call for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. To say we should not because the imperialists also call for it is to say that socialists should let what the imperialists say determine what we say. It is to

derive what we say from a negative imprint of the imperialists.

It is as much to abandon political independence as if we were to start out from a desire to stay in tune with the imperialists. We say "Iraq out of Kuwait!" from our own viewpoint because Iraq has no right to annex the people living there against their will, and still less has it a right to plunder and rob and torture and murder and deport them.

"Self-determination for Kuwait" is a different matter. Kuwait is an artificial unit, where the Kuwaitis are not a nation but a privileged caste exploiting migrant labour. We would not necessarily be against a democratic Iraq — let alone a socialist Iraq — annexing Kuwait. But not this murderous Iraqi regime!

Imperialism in the Gulf

At the end of World War 2 the US emerged as the colossus of the capitalist world. It imposed its own "peace" and order on that world, a Pax Americana.

It systematically worked to end the old imperial trading blocs of Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium. American hegemony, the old imperial powers' comparative decrepitude, and the unquenchable revolts of some of the colonial peoples, broke up the old capitalist empires in the two decades after the war.

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

So the Pax Americana Mark 1, after 1945, saw the restructuring of the non-Stalinist part of the world under US hegemony on a basis

reminiscent of Britain's "imperialism of free trade" in the mid-19th century. The post-Cold-War Pax Americana Mark 2 for which Bush is now bidding is set to include an element, and an economically essential one, of old-style colonial imperialism. That is the logic of what is happening in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates are not typical Third World states, and it is hard to imagine the US or any other power reimposing 19th century colonialism in other ex-colonial areas. But Arabia is an important area in and of itself. And another trend is relevant here.

Despite its apparently supreme position in the Gulf crisis, the US is in relative decline. That decline unleashes a jousting for position among other capitalist big powers. The collapse of Stalinism, and the opening up of Eastern Europe to Western capital, intensifies that jousting.

Since at least the early '70s pressures have been growing towards protectionism and curbs on trade. So far the big powers have resisted those pressures with considerable success — but how much longer? How much longer if the Gulf crisis sparks a new world slump? And, in a world of intensified competition, how will the

other big powers react if the US corners the world's greatest oil stocks for itself? Won't they want their own colonial or semi-colonial preserves?

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

"We do not like it, but so be it. We control our economy. We are a solvent state. We have desks, telephones, staffs, lines of credit."

The Emir has even said that he doesn't mind if Kuwait is bombed flat, as long as Iraq is defeated.

Already before the invasion, the Kuwaiti elite's income from their maybe \$100 billion of overseas investments was greater than from oil. They still control and draw income from those investments.

Kuwait was never a democracy. Only 60,000 out of its two million people were entitled to vote, and even the National Assembly they elected had been dissolved by the Emir.

Eric Heffer MP

This war is led by the United States of America. Despite the United Nations resolutions, the whole international community is not involved.

It is a war for oil! A war to maintain American and British hegemony in the Middle East.

The entire labour movement should organise to resist this imperialist war in every possible way.

Liberating Kuwait?

"We are ready for business," the Kuwaiti financier told the *Independent on Sunday* on 26 August. "The only difference is that now we do it here — in London — and not there."

So much for the war propaganda about "liberating Kuwait". The Emir, whom the US want to put back into power, and the Kuwaiti elite, look not much like an oppressed nation. "Our country is occupied," said the Kuwaiti

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Arab nationalism

Saddam Hussein has tried to appeal over the heads of the Arab governments to a common Arab nationalism. He appeals not only against the foreign intruders, but also against the ultra-backward Arab feudal regimes in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. And all across the Arab world — and especially on the West Bank — there are answering voices, sometimes thunderous.

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

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

Tony Benn MP

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. American has benefited much recently from cheap middle eastern oil. 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. (Speaking in Parliament on 7 September)

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

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

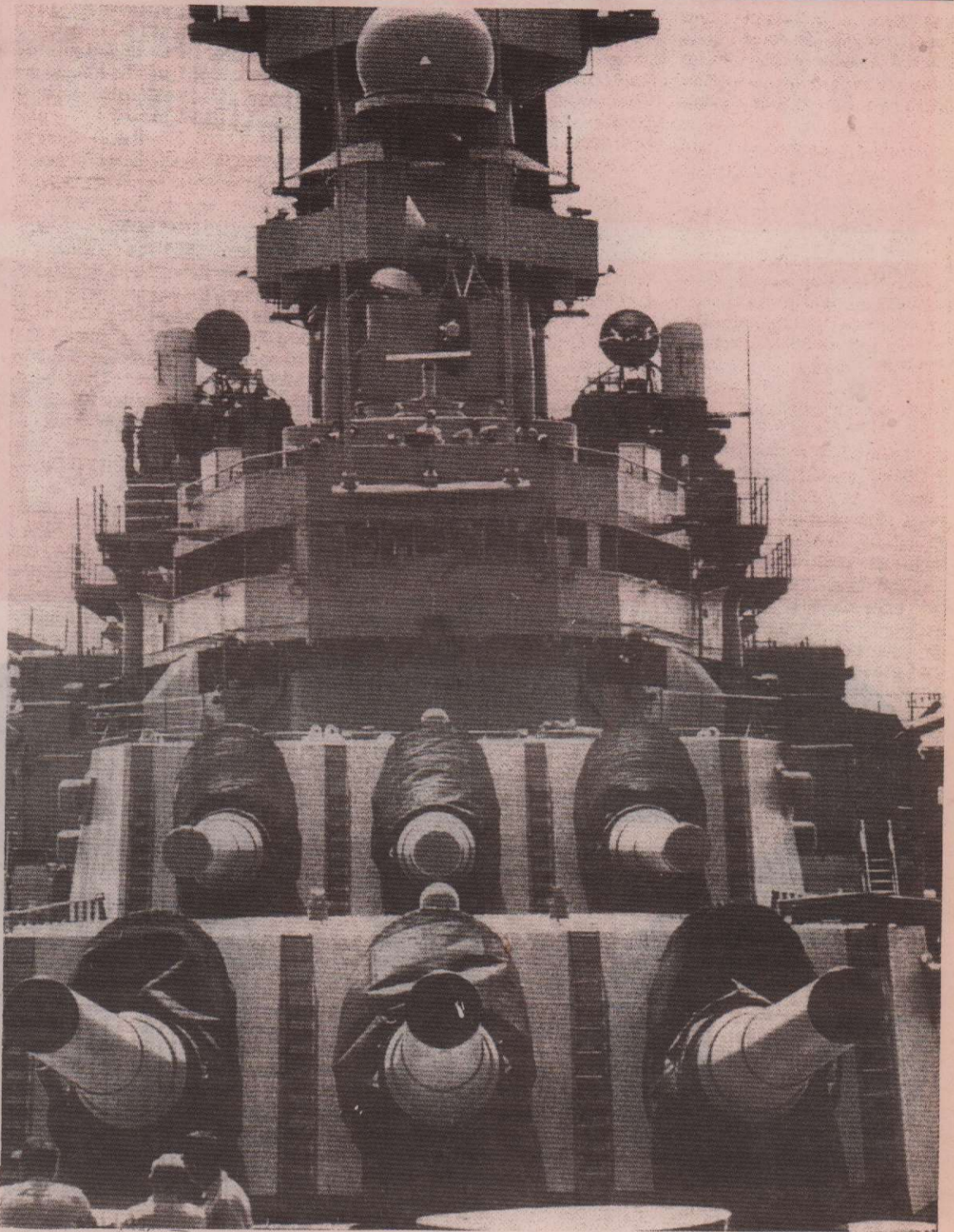
The Arabs are like the Germans or the Italians in the middle of the 19th century — split up into many states — though no-one can tell for sure what the direction of movement will be, towards unity or towards separate identities.

Nasserist pan-Arab nationalism tried to be secular and anti-imperialist, and to overthrow the old order of sheikhdoms and monarchies, artificially carved out and protected by British imperialism. It committed itself to the destruction of Israel. Some of the old regimes were destroyed. But Nasserism failed. There was no Arab unity, no destruction of Israel, no general revolution against the feudalists. Mass enthusiasm for Nasserism turned into disappointment, and into the vast reactionary wave of Islamic fundamentalism which has developed since the 1970s.

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

Cynical, self-serving and demagogic as it is, Saddam Hussein's Nasserist posturing has immense implications for the US-allied enterprise in the Gulf. His chances of survival are much less than Nasser's in 1956. But even if he is crushed, his demagoguery can set the ground alight under the feet of the invaders and of their Arab allies. Saddam as a martyr may plague them more than Saddam alive.

The war is likely to destabilise at least some of the US's Arab allies, and thus to make US-British withdrawal after the war very difficult and to condemn the region to long years of further wars. However loathsome Saddam Hussein and his regime are, this is a strong reason why the Arabs should have been left without foreign interference to sort out their own affairs.



Iraq faces huge firepower

Iraqi sub-imperialism

None of the crimes of the US justify the invasion of Kuwait. The Saddam Hussein regime is among the most butcherous in the world.

Some 10,000 Iraqi emigres living in Kuwait were rounded up and sent back to Iraq for slaughter. Kuwait has been ransacked and pillaged, its people abused and oppressed.

The US and the West built up Iraq as a sub-imperialist power to replace their subverted sub-

imperialist client state in Iran after the Shah fell. Without that Western support Saddam would not have survived the failure of his hopes for a quick victory when he invaded Iran in 1980.

Now the sub-imperialist wants to be a fully-fledged regional power. The erstwhile client and his backers have fallen out. *The conflict over Kuwait is a clash between US imperialism (and its allies) and an ambitious sub-imperialism.* It is a quarrel between thieves.

Not his demagoguery about Arab unity, nor even a real leadership of most of the divided Arab people, would make Saddam Hussein and

his Ba'athist military regime other than a bitter enemy of socialists and democrats, especially Arab socialists and democrats.

The socialist who gives any credence to Saddam Hussein is no longer a socialist.

Iraq is a sub-imperialist power, competing with its former sponsor, the US. Even if the Arabs could be united around the 17 million strong Iraqi state (there are 200 million Arabs, 50 million of them in Egypt), it would be like the Prussian unification of Germany in 1871; socialists and democrats

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The Palestinians, Israel and the war

In the House of Commons debate on the Gulf war, Prime Minister John Major had it pointed out to him that the exiled Emir of Kuwait had said he did not object if Kuwait was levelled to the ground provided he got it back.

Major's answer, in so far as there was one, was to say that there were big principles involved (and too bad for the people in Kuwait). It was the spirit of the US general who said of a Vietnamese city that he had to destroy it in order to save it. They say there is a war to liberate Kuwait — but in fact the people living in Kuwait are likely to be among its chief victims.

So are the Palestinian Arabs. The Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza have been

under Israeli occupation for over 23 years. Their intifada has gone on for four years.

Militarily, they have little chance against Israel. Israel ignores pro-Palestinian UN resolutions, and its backers, in the first place the US, allow it to.

So most Palestinians support Iraq and Saddam Hussein. They may choose to step up their intifada now to help Iraq.

They are likely to be caught in the middle in this war. They may face an opportunistic drive by the Israeli government, or freelance Israeli chauvinists, to drive them, or some of them, out of the West Bank.

Socialists must defend the Palestinians. But that is only part of the picture. Israel too is under threat. If he is able to, Saddam Hussein will attack Israel in the hope of thereby dividing his Arab

allies from Bush. Israel has the right to defend itself; and Israel, of course, has the military might to hit back.

Israel, too, has every motive to encourage the hiving off of Bush's Arab allies, because if the alliance survives the war then there will be immense pressure on Israel to get out of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel will be shown to be not the necessary ally of the West in the region, but a liability.

This jigsaw of conflict does not lend itself to easy or glib sloganeering. But it clarifies certain things.

It shows up for nonsense the long-time common leftist view that Israel (and not the Arab bourgeoisies) was essential to the West's influence over and sometimes domination of the Arabs.

The Palestinian Arabs' alliance

with Saddam Hussein, based on their understandable hope that he will smash Israel for them, shows up for utopian daydreaming the idea that the solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict lies not in two states for the two peoples — Israel and an independent Palestinian-Arab state — but in a single "secular democratic state" which welds them together in a common and equal citizenship. Whatever the conquest of Israel by Saddam Hussein might create, it would not be democratic.

Socialists have to keep all the sides of this picture in mind. Supporting Israel's right to exist, we must defend the Palestinian Arabs and support their intifada. We must support the right of the whole Arab people to unite and to be free from foreign conquest. Support for that right is not conditional on the

Arabs' acceptance of Israel, but the question is *how* the Arabs can unite. Socialists advocate a democratic — and not a "Prussian"-Iraqi — unification, and Arab acceptance of the national rights of minority nations in the region such as the Kurds and Israeli Jews.

Supporting the Palestinians' drive for their own independent state in the West Bank and Gaza, and understanding why it is that they come to be militants in Saddam Hussein's cause, we must continue to reject the demonisation of Israel.

Self-determination for *all* the peoples in the Middle East — Palestinian Arabs, Kurds, and Israeli Jews included — is the answer. In Palestine: two nations, two states!

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The Gulf War: issues for Labour

What's wrong with pacifism

THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Patrick Murphy



In 18 years of living in Northern Ireland it was rare for me to see mass demonstrations which genuinely cut across the sectarian boundaries. In 1976, therefore, it was hard not to be impressed by the sudden rise of the 'Peace Movement'.

Two Catholic women, who had suffered a tragic loss in one of many violent incidents, decided to organise a grassroots campaign 'against violence and for peace'. There was, deliberately, no attempt to suggest any solution to the underlying problems of Northern Ireland. This was my first confrontation with 'pacifism' and the moral force and potential power of it impressed...for a short while!

The demos were remarkable; tens of thousands, Protestant and Catholic, overwhelmingly women, genuinely furious at the destruction and chaos being inflicted upon their communities. The beginnings were spontaneous, but the British press quickly latched on and used the protests in their own propaganda war. That in itself would not condemn the movement, any cross-community project could be exploited in that way. But I also remember vividly the fall of the apparently unstoppable Peace Movement, and it was educational.

In August 1976 in Whitecross, Co. Armagh, a 12 year old girl called Majella O'Hare walked down a country road with her friends. They passed a group of blacked-up soldiers from the Parachute Regiment hidden in a ditch; a cold brief exchange occurred, the girls walked on and minutes later Majella O'Hare lay dying, the victim of a Paratrooper's bullet. It made national news,



Betty Williams (right, beside folk singer Joan Baez) and Mairead Corrigan (left, beside Jane Ewart-Biggs, wife of a British ambassador to Ireland blown up by

the IRA, and presently a Labour peer), founders of the Peace Movement, lead a 30,000-strong demonstration in London, November 1976. The Peace Movement's

failure to address the real issues of Northern Ireland led, eventually, to its demise.

it was a savage crime, everyone in the nationalist community waited for the Peace Movement's condemnation. They waited in vain. The Movement reacted quickly to IRA and, to be fair, to loyalist violence, but there was a limit. The 'security forces' were there to stop violence, to keep law and order, to criticise them could undermine confidence, encourage the real men of violence — and so on. Thus the old argument ran. The Peace People lost influence shortly after this incident. Catholics became more disillusioned and the Peace leaders seemed more concerned with being internationally feted (they won the Nobel Peace Prize) than the concerns of their communities.

The Northern Ireland Peace People did not represent all pacifism, nobody does, but it was fairly typical. It was not dishonest, the intentions and instincts were genuine. The problem was its failure to address the reality of the world. For a sizeable part of the Northern Irish people the main chaos and fear in their lives was brought about by the police and army. The republican violence began as a self-defensive response to this. The instinct to oppose rule by force, violence against humans, is a good one.

As a political guide to action, however, pacifism is fatally disarming. To insist that all force is equally bad and that all should abandon in principle the use of force is, in practice, to support those already in power. It is a matter of tactics, for example, whether and when the blacks of South Africa should use force to defeat apartheid, but experience suggests that such powerful people as the rulers of South Africa will not be beaten without it. Whatever the course of that struggle it would be absurd to insist in advance that force be renounced. The renunciation of force in principle in all situations is an abstract self-indulgence in a world in which all things are not equal.

In reality, that is in actual historical experience, the role of pacifism has been to persuade the oppressed to use no force; it has had no effect on the oppressors. Gandhi, for example, took British imperial force for granted, it was his own followers of whom he demanded rigid adherence to a code of non-violence.

"In practice, most pacifists deal with this threat [of civil war] by accepting the 'need' for a police force..."

Pacifists do not usually appreciate the causes of violence. They would acknowledge that there are serious conflicts in society, inequalities which lead to low level individual violence very day and which can explode into mass violence or civil war at points of crisis. In practice, most pacifists deal with this threat by accepting the 'need' for a police force, and in fact accepting the existing forces as legitimate, natural bodies which can minimise crime and violence. Between nations they look for a similar, neutral, independent police, hence the great faith in the UN.

The whole idea that there can be coercive

bodies above and independent of the conflicting interests in society is, however, utopian. The police are controlled by, and accountable only to, the political and legal bodies which run this society, where the rights of property and profit are paramount.

The UN was shaped consciously by the world's leading powers to preserve their own domination. It should be no surprise to anyone that it treats US conquest of Panama, or Soviet invasion of Lithuania, much differently than Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

It is not, in truth, violence as such to which pacifists object; it is 'new' or additional violence to that which already exists, that which is necessary, controlled and proper. Thus it is impossible to change the existing order with pacifism. This is ironic since it is that divisive, exploitative order which of necessity brings us wars. So as long as we have pacifism we shall have wars.

None of this should lead any socialist to identify with violence. Change without violence is obviously more desirable than civil war. A society without violence or serious regular bouts of war is a realisable and essential part of our programme. But we must speak the truth. Historical experience suggests that progress has depended, at key moments, on the force from below becoming so great that the old rulers could no longer continue. Consider the victories of colonial peoples across the world after 1945. The same experience suggests that failure to meet a violent challenge at certain times will lead to deeper reaction and even more savage and systematic violence. Think only of the failure of socialists and democrats to prevent the rise of fascism in the inter-war years.

Pacifism is a fatally mistaken means, even to its own ends. It allows a world based on violent rule to enjoy a longer life. It applies to all wars an abstract response; above history, outside the specific circumstances which cause conflict when in fact an examination of each case is an indispensable guide to action. The inconsistency of all practical pacifism is no less dangerous for not being deliberate.

Something else I remember about the Peace Movement in Northern Ireland is the response of the Republican movement. For all their faults, they captured the limits of the campaign in their own slogan: 'Peace — Yes but with Justice'. Revulsion at war as a way of settling human conflict is a healthy instinct but to call simply for peace in South Africa or Northern Ireland, or in the struggle between workers and their bosses, is not necessarily progressive, democratic or even anti-violence.

Iraq at war

From page 7

would accept it, but fight the political regime.

In fact that unity is impossible. Even after facing down Britain and France over Suez in 1956, Nasser could not unite the Arabs around Egypt, which already had a quarter of all Arabs.

Newspapers like *Socialist Worker* have said that Saddam Hussein is now "objectively anti-imperialist". But he is not! And pan-Arab nationalism is not really anti-imperialist either!

Socialists should support the unity of the Arab people if the Arabs wish it. The achievement of such unity would be progressive, in part because it would clear the minds of the Arab working class and help them to deal with their own ruling classes. But popular pan-Arab nationalism today is an ideological system which ties the working class to the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the bourgeoisie.

The crimes of the imperialist powers against the Arabs are many and they are great. But it is the Arab ruling classes that control the Arab states today, and it is the Arab ruling classes that perpetuate the divisions.

To accept as even provisional good coin, for now, the anti-imperialism of Sad-

dam Hussein is to betray the Arab workers and peasants, especially because we are forced by events to side with Saddam against the US-allied drive to blitz and maybe occupy Iraq. For Iraqi national rights? Yes! For Saddam's policy? Never!

The real anti-imperialist programme in the Middle East today is the programme of working-class action, and the real revolutionary unifier of the Arabs is the creation of the Socialist United States of the Middle East.

Iraq's national rights

Yet there is more to it. The Iraqi ruling class pursues Iraqi aggrandisement. But in the war now unfolding Iraq risks being reduced to a semi-colony, or shattered completely, with Turkey, Iran and Syria grabbing portions of its territory.

We should support Iraqi self-determination and Iraqi self-defence against the American blitzkrieg. Such support does not mean any political endorsement for Saddam Hussein, nor any let-up in the Iraqi workers' struggle against him.

It is wrong to give Saddam credit as an "anti-imperialist". It would be

equally wrong to deny support for Iraq's self-defence against the US-allied assault on the grounds that, Iraq being sub-imperialist, the war is only a quarrel between thieves.

A sub-imperialism is an aspirant regional imperialism, usually a client or semi-client of a fully-developed imperialist state — Argentina and Brazil in South America, for example, Iran and then Iraq in the Middle East. The term was first coined by Latin American Marxists in the '60s to describe Brazil.

Iraq is sub-imperialist. Yet as recently as 1958 it was a semi-colony of Britain. In the course of its over-ambitious contest with the US now, it may well find itself faced with conquest and subjugation again. The sub-imperialist drive can collapse into its opposite.

When Iraq confronts the US in all-out war, the imperialism is that of the US. Socialists have no interest in seeing Iraq subjugated or pulverised.

This war is different from the Falklands war. Argentina was not threatened, and was never likely to be threatened, with invasion, subjugation, dismemberment, destruction of its military-industrial base, or a blitzkrieg from the air.

US bosses still paying the price for Vietnam

By Tom Rigby

Last week the big business daily, the *Wall Street Journal*, described the state of the anti-war movement over here.

"They said it was bigger, stronger and had much more support in the blue collar working class than the anti-Vietnam war movement."

That's what Phil Kwik, a reporter on the US trade union paper *Labor Notes* told *Socialist Organiser* as thousands of trade union activists prepared to join other anti-war campaigners in a mass march on Washington this Saturday (26 January).

Phil, speaking from Detroit, heart of the US car industry, stressed the strong anti-war stance of many black workers, including those in heavy industry.

"There is a notable division within the working class between Afro-American and white workers. Afro-American soldiers paid a disproportionately high price for

the Vietnam war and this has not been forgotten."

Phil said that the majority of black workers were probably anti-war, whereas about two thirds of white workers back it, for now. "Afro-Americans say 'we paid the price in Vietnam; it was our sons and brothers who died; our sons and brothers are not going to die this time'."

The US ruling class, it seems, is still paying the price for Vietnam.

Not surprisingly, the official leadership of US labour — the executive council of the AFL-CIO [US TUC] — has come out in support of the war; urging all Americans to close ranks behind George Bush. They put out a statement this week that could have been written by Neil Kinnock, if he was more concise: "The labour movement stands in full support of our country and the brave men and women of our armed forces in their efforts to bring the conflict to an early conclusion."

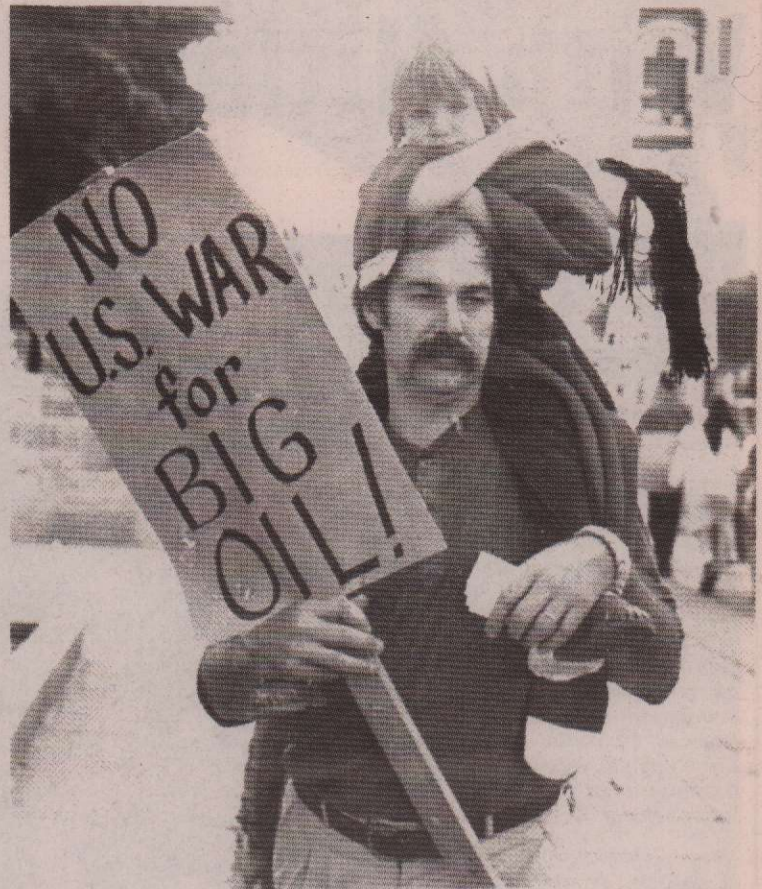
This statement, however, should not be read as representing

unanimous support for the war, even amongst the highest levels of the officialdom of US labour.

Phil said that most of the union leaders who signed the 'Let sanctions work' appeal, published in *SO* last week, had not themselves yet come out in support of the war, although some probably would.

"There are clearly some divisions at the top of the trade union movement," explained Phil, "already there are plans for a special trade union meeting after this weekend's anti-war march. This meeting has been called by various state level union bodies which means that the issue is already well and truly alive quite high up the decision-making chain."

"If the war goes on till the Spring we can expect it to become a major issue at union conferences. Just compare this to the Vietnam war: it took three years before the first US trade union, the United Auto Workers — led by Walter Reuther and reflecting strong anti-war feeling amongst black workers — came out against the war in '68."



Demonstration in Detroit, September 1990



Australia

80,000 joined demonstrations round Australia on Saturday 19 and Friday 18. 40,000 marched in Sydney, and there were protests as far afield as Hobart and Darwin.

The demonstrations were sponsored by two coalitions, 'Bring the Frigates Home!' (mainly based on the left groups) and 'Network for Peace' (more recently established, involving churches, Greenpeace, the Australian

Democrats, etc, and demanding 'No war' rather than 'Troops out').

The war is coming up for debate in Parliament. The Australian Democrats (roughly the equivalents of the Liberal Democrats in Britain) will oppose the war, as will some independent MPs, and nine MPs from the governing Labor Party are reported ready to abstain.

The next demonstration in Sydney is planned for 3 February. *Tony Brown*

Unions call German demo

There could be anything up to 500,000 people on the national demonstration in Bonn on 26 January, called by the DGB (German TUC) to demand an end to the war.

The unions have also called a five-minute strike on Friday 25 January; leftists are calling for it to be extended to a half-day stoppage. The metalworkers' union IG Metall and the printworkers' union IG Druck have been particularly active against the war.

There have also been demonstrations of school students against the war in almost every town in Germany, and a school students' general strike has been called for 22 January. Students as young as nine years of age have been involved in the movement, which has included such actions as blocking railway trains carrying US military supplies.

There has been anti-war action in eastern Germany as well as in the west, but usually less militant in the east. Konrad Weiss, a leader of the East German Greens, has denounced the peace demonstrations, and many leaders of Neues Forum also oppose the anti-war movement.

There are anti-war groups in all major cities, involving the radical left and sections of the Social Democrat youth movement. The SPD and the West German Greens are supporting the protests, but not campaigning actively.

Thanks to 'Sozialistische Zeitung'

Israel

There have been no demonstrations against the war in Israel since 15 January. We have all been under curfew — it's the first time ever that both Israelis and Palestinians have been under curfew at the same time and anyway, the political situation is not conducive.

At first any anti-war movement will be limited to the radical left. The Zionist left has become quite enthusiastic in favour of the war. The newspaper of Mapam, the left Zionist paper, condemns the Americans for not declaring the overthrow of Saddam Hussein (in addition to the re-taking of Kuwait) as a war aim, and calls on the European and US left to stop demonstrating and support the war.

But there is an anti-war campaign meeting on 23 January, and the Israeli Socialist Left, Shasi, a Eurocommunist-inclined group, has already put out an open declaration against the war.

"This war," it declares, "broke out

because of:

- A desperate attempt by the US to assert its imperialist role...by spilling blood for oil...
 - The megalomania of the Iraqi dictator...
 - The stubborn obstinacy of the government of Israel in holding on to the occupied territories...
- "We demand...an immediate end to the war! We warn against attempts by the government to exploit the situation by escalating the repression against the Palestinian people to the point of implementing the 'transfer' plot."
- There is no mood of nationalist euphoria. Most Israelis are in favour of the war, but resigned, not enthusiastic. The newspaper *Ma'ariv* has published a statement by people whose houses were hit by the Iraqi missiles calling for Israel not to retaliate. And more and more people want to get rid of the occupied territories.
- In the first week of the Lebanon war, too, we were isolated. It is more difficult now, but things can change. *Adam Keller and Beate Kiezer*

Al Meyer gives an eyewitness account of the 19 January anti-war march in Washington DC

100,000 demonstrated against the war in Washington DC on 19 January.

Media reports had indicated only 10 to 15,000 participants; and the authorities in DC made it very difficult to assemble. Buses were not

France

A big national demonstration has been called for 26 January.

It is called by the same coalition as organised the 100,000-strong protest on 12 January, involving the Communist Party, the CGT trade union federation, the Greens, Socialist Party leftists, and the various left groups.

The CGT called a 15-minute strike on the day of the Parliamentary vote on the war. There were longer stoppages in some workplaces, including a postal sorting offices where the workers walked out for the whole shift, and railworkers have taken action against trains carrying military supplies for the Gulf.

Thanks to 'Rouge'

allowed to drop passengers off at the site of the demonstration, but had to leave them five miles away.

The dispute within the anti-war movement as to whether or not to criticise Saddam and his occupation of Kuwait was settled, so to speak, on the streets. Many of the speakers at the rally drew a parallel between Saddam Hussein and George Bush.

The fact that Jesse Jackson, a calculating politician wishing to secure the Democratic Party Presidential nomination in 1992, appeared as an unscheduled speaker at the rally on the 19th shows the breadth of support for the anti-war cause.

Attempts by mainstream politicians to co-opt this grass roots movement must be resisted.

While the level of protest has not yet reached the level of those at the height of the anti-Vietnam war movement, the consciousness of the protesters is in many ways politically more advanced.

During the Vietnam war many speakers would have concentrated on the moral issues. Today, although the moral case against the

atrocities of bombing the Iraqi people has not been ignored, the anti-war case is wider: recession, ecological issues and the disproportionate casualties expected amongst America's ethnic minorities were all taken up by many of the speakers, who focused on the fact that this is a war for oil.

Spain

More than two million workers struck, and thousands of school and university students joined demonstrations against Spanish involvement in the Gulf war on 18 January.

Workers throughout Spain responded to the trade unions' call for a two-hour stoppage to support an end to hostilities and the recall of three Spanish warships helping enforce the UN embargo on Iraq.

A broader movement

From Barry Finger in New York

Since the bombing began, anti-war activities throughout the US have intensified.

On the campuses, students have boycotted classes and occupied. 113 demonstrators were arrested at the University of California at Los Angeles last Friday. There is a 24-hour occupation of the administration building. They have demanded a day-long teach-in on the war.

In San Francisco a series of protests in the last few days blocked the Bay Bridge.

Other protests took place in Boston; Albany, New York; Salt Lake City; Fayetteville, Arkansas; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and in countless other communities.

40 to 50,000 protestors con-

gregated in the downtown Mission district of San Francisco on 19 January. As the San Francisco and Washington marches were breaking up, the Bush administration announced the activation of 200,000 reservists and the resumption of the draft.

The level of anti-war participation is more cross-cultural, cross-generational and rooted in the mainstream than during the early years of the Vietnam war. Largely absent however is an identifiable Jewish presence.

While the organisers of this wave of demonstrations are indifferent to the occupation of Kuwait, the sentiment of the rank and file is undisguisedly hostile to the Iraqi rulers. This hostility will serve the movement well. It pre-empts one predictably glaring weakness that the American administration will otherwise surely exploit against it.

With Hitler, on the road to Samara

AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



"The State of Israel, is racist, genocidally anti-Arab — hence our definition of it as a regime of the Nazi type — arising from the alliance between the ultra-reactionary Zionist movement and imperialism, supported by the Soviet bureaucracy... The atrocious anti-semitic persecution and massacring of Jews by the Nazis in Europe was used by Zionism and by imperialism to justify the existence of Israel as a colonial enclave and to convert the much-persecuted Jews into persecutors of the Arabs" — 'Correo Internacional' December 1990

Of course you know the much-told story. A man was in the market place, and he saw Death, and Death looked at him intently, recognising him.

In a panic, he ran to his horse and galloped away desperately, taking the road to the city of Samara.

As he galloped off, Death turned to his companion. "Strange," he said, "that was so-and-so. I was very surprised to see him here, because I have an appointment with him, this evening, in Samara."

Death is all powerful. There is no escape when he reaches your name on the list.

Consider now, and the association is appropriate enough, the fate of poor Adolf Hitler. This heroic son of the German people understood early in life that the Jews were responsible for all the evil in the world.

He knew that the Jews were behind everything! He knew that Socialism and Communism were Jewish, and that the Jews were also behind finance capital.

He knew that modern art was pornography and corruption, and modern culture decadent — and he knew that the Jews were responsible. This genius understood that Jewish Bolshevism and "Jewish capital" were all one. Despite the appearance of difference and antagonism between these things, Hitler could see that all of them — socialism, finance capital, cultural and artistic decadence — were really one thing. They were aspects of one tightly organised and minutely-directed world Jewish conspiracy.

And so Hitler fought the Jews. He roused much of Germany against them. In the middle of the 20th century, he re-created the medieval ghettos in some of the main cities of European civilisation.

When the Jews who ruled in London, Paris, Moscow and Washington declared war on the German Reich, Hitler set out to do the job properly: he organised the killing of six million Jews.

One quarter of these were children: but Hitler refused to be deterred. He knew the extent of Jew-Zion power. He understood that sentimentality would be fatal. And Hitler — before the Jews finally got him — managed to kill two out of every three Jews in Europe.

Now, you wouldn't say, would you, that Adolf Hitler underestimated the power of the Jews?

The left at the time of Hitler used to say he was a criminal maniac. But the left just didn't understand.

And neither did Adolf Hitler. This great man understood a lot about the Jews. But he didn't understand everything. The truth is that even Hitler underestimated the extent and power of the world Jewish conspiracy.

Not only were communism and finance capital — those seemingly mortal enemies — tools of the international conspiracy of Zion — so were the Nazis, themselves! Hitler and his valiant warriors against Zion — far-sighted men like Himmler and Heydrich and Streicher — were themselves mere tools of the world Jewish conspiracy.

The Holocaust was just Hitler galloping off down the road to his own Samara. The Holocaust, too, served Jewish interests!



Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it

Once again, in the Baltics, the rulers of the USSR are using war in the Middle East as a cover for a crackdown against a people within their own empire who are trying to break away.

In 1956 Eastern Europe was thrown into ferment when Russia's first reforming Stalinist Tzar Nikita Krushchev denounced his predecessor Joseph Stalin as a murdering tyrant. The Poles and Hungarians led by reformist Stalinists and ex-Stalinists tried to act as independent states.

Without the great anti-Jewish warrior for one moment guessing what was going on, the guiding centre of the world Jewish conspiracy helped him in this work of killing Jews. Why did the Jews help Hitler kill the Jews? That, you see, was the easiest way they could win a Jewish state.

By a process of reasoning inaccessible to the ordinary human intelligence, the Jewish super-conspirators decided that the best way to secure Israel was to kill six million Jews.

Don't waste your time trying to understand this. Neither formal logic nor dialectics will help you understand: the subtlety and evil of the Elders of Zion have always puzzled the ordinary man, who is doing well if he becomes aware that this conspiracy exists, and can raise the alarm about it. Rational explanations are neither possible nor necessary.

The Jews helped Hitler in all sorts of ways, instructing the US government to keep Jews out of America, and doing many other things to help the Nazis, things that would need a cleverer man than myself to chronicle and unravel for you. After all, it was too complicated for even Hitler — who devoted his life to understanding the Jewish conspiracy — to understand. And thus he failed to save himself from being an instrument of the international Zionist conspiracy that he spent his life fighting.

"We should stand against any reflux of hysterical 'anti-Zionism'. We should strip off the masks and the illusions..."

All you need to know is that the Jews proved too clever for poor Adolf Hitler! So Hitler died confused, a Jewish dupe. Israel came into being, and has never done anything but evil in the world.

Here, let me change the note. You will think by now I am mad. The tale I have just sketched in is crazy — as mad as Hitler!

No — madder than Hitler. It is a long stretch further down the road into the dark lands of paranoia. And it is outrageous. To traduce Hitler's victims and his potential victims, blaming the Jews for the Holocaust, outrages both common sense and known history. And it outrages human decency.

Yet the crazy thesis I have just set out in the form of a simple, albeit fantastic, story

lies at the heart of the conventional wisdom of much of the left now: the thesis that "the Zionists" collaborated with the Nazis in one degree or another and that they thus share more or less of the responsibility for the great massacre.

Liberal Stalinists kept a hold in Poland. In Hungary serious fighting broke out into an outright insurrection against Russian rule. After a week of fighting the Russians withdrew from Budapest. Then the British, French and Israelis invaded Egypt to reclaim control of the Suez Canal. Krushchev sent his tanks back in, and they crushed the Hungarians, for a generation.

The way history is repeating itself right now is uncanny enough to make your hair stand on end.

Just as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were forged by the Tsarist secret police, this "anti-Zionist" thesis was formulated by the Stalinist state in the USSR, to justify its anti-semitism. It then spread to a wide spectrum of the left, including anti-Stalinists. Books like Lenni Brenner's *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* recycle the thesis in qualified, half-hidden form; the recent play *Perdition*, and dozens of articles and pamphlets restate it partially, if also more crudely, like *Correo Internacional*.

Emotional solidarity with the Palestinian Arabs, and therefore emotional hostility to Israel, is the root of the credulity with which these fantastic tales and grotesque constructions on real events are accepted on the left.

It is the source of the "demand" which "anti-Zionism" supplies, and of the willingness, and even eagerness, to identify Zionism and Israel with fascism, or to come as close as sense can be stretched to identifying them.

It is one of the roots of the criminal tosh quoted at the head of this article. The publishers of the widely circulated Spanish language 'Trotskyist' journal *Correo Internacional* (the 'Morenists') are very crass, and say things brutally that others who share their essential ideas and attitudes would not say even to themselves. That is a merit of the "Morenists".

They are insignificant in Britain, but strong in a number of other countries, and numerically they are perhaps the biggest of the so-called Trotskyist currents. They are very strong in Argentina, where not so long ago the right-wing Peronists had as a slogan: "Kill a Jew a day". During the Iran-Iraq war they called on the combatants to make peace with each other for the purpose of jointly making war on Israel.

Leftists who accept such ideas don't realise that they — like the bureaucrats of the USSR who first shaped the current left wisdom about Zionism and fascism and put it into circulation — are reproducing the pre-war right wing and fascist thesis about the world Jewish conspiracy.

The whole thing is crazy. But if "the

Zionists", even while six million Jews were being killed, were nevertheless controlling what happened — stopping the US government letting in Jewish refugees, deliberately organising the killing of one million Hungarian Jews towards the end of the war, and so on, in order to win Israel for the Jews — if "they" could do that during the war, then the theories of a powerful Jewish conspiracy before the war were wrong only as understatements. The prevailing thesis about Zionism-Fascism-Israel can rest on no logical ground except the pre-war world Jewish conspiracy theory.

Of course nobody on the left would explicitly tell the story I told about Hitler. The anti-fascist, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist feeling of the anti-Zionist left prevents them from understanding it and from spelling it out coherently.

Nevertheless, that is the story sections of the left implicitly tell now. If you try to spell out what is said about Zionist collusion with the Nazis in pursuit of the Zionist goal of a Jewish state, then you must come up with some version of the story I told above. If the tale the left now tells could be told openly and honestly, opening out and tracing back the implications which are plainly there in what is said and insisted upon, then it would have to be a version of the tale I have concocted. That is the real and only possible relationship that what is now said by the left can be seen to have with what Hitler said on the same subject.

And it is not a matter of parallels that never meet. The assertion about the Zionists' co-responsibility for the Holocaust ties it all together. An honest historical balance-sheet from that point of view would have to place Hitler himself in the perspective of history — that is, of the post-Holocaust working-out of the "international Jewish conspiracy". Hitler lost: the Third Reich fell and Israel rose!

If the "lefts" who demonise Israel could confront the logic of what they say now they would find themselves at a bridge — and on the other side of it, the earlier history of the ideas behind that logic. If it could be thought through logically, free from the powerful inhibitions created by hatred of Nazism and of racism in general, then what the left says now would compel recognition that Hitler was informed and insightful on this question.

The reasons why the "anti-Zionist" left do not tease out such conclusions all speak in their favour — horror of Nazism, disgust with racism, and so on. They are after all socialists, whose basic impulses and aspirations are the same as SO's. Such people must denounce articles like this as foul slander — and go on as before.

But the good side which stops them thinking through the meaning of what they say has a bad consequence here. It allows them, fuelled by sympathy with the Palestinians and hatred of imperialism, blithely to go on peddling a disguised and sanitised version of facets of ideas they would shy away from in horror if ever they were forced to look at the question in its wholeness.

We don't know what terrible things will happen in Israel and Palestine during this war. The Israeli chauvinists are capable of doing — and maybe eager to do — terrible, indefensible things to the Palestinian Arabs; the Palestinian Arabs are allied with Saddam Hussein, who may, if the balance in the war and his technology allow it, drop poison-gas bombs on Israeli cities. We don't know.

We should support Israel's right to defend itself; support the Palestinian Arabs in so far as it is a matter of them trying to gain control of their own territories from the Israeli army; and back the Israeli anti-chauvinists who want a just settlement with the Palestinians. That is all we can do.

We should stand against any reflux of hysterical "anti-Zionism". We should strip off the masks and the illusions behind which lurk ideas like those I have explored here. We are fighting for sanity and against unreason on the left, so we should not let delicacy stop us from confronting our misguided comrades, brutally, with the brute — Nazi — logic, implications and ancestry of some of the ideas they have adopted from putrescent Stalinism. We must insist, whatever the war brings to the Palestinians and the Israelis: No, Hitler was not right!

Having the rich

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *Reversal of Fortune*

Reversal of Fortune is about a legal case, but it doesn't spend much time in court.

All the excitement comes from digging up evidence, and when the final result comes through, it's hearsay; we aren't on the spot.

The film is about Claus Von Bulow's attempts to overturn the guilty verdict against him for the attempted murder of his rich wife, Sunny. Von Bulow and his wife had been members of the international rich set; Sunny's former husband was a German prince, and her family was wealthy.

She held the purse strings. As she scoffingly says, "Claus only had about a million of his own." In that society, a million is peanuts.

When Sunny slipped into a coma, there were many who said Claus helped her to it, as a way of getting his hands on her money. The marriage was pretty much over; he had mistresses. He wanted a career, and Sunny insisted on complete idleness.

But did he do it? The courts thought so, and he was found guilty of attempted murder. But he was determined to appeal, and hired a Jewish law professor from Harvard to plead his case.

They were an odd match; the haughty, and reportedly anti-Semitic, Von Bulow, and the warm, do-gooder Dershowitz, who used the proceeds from his high falutin' cases to do free legal work for the oppressed.

Von Bulow stated his innocence from day one, but Dershowitz didn't believe him. He took the case only because he disliked the way Claus had been found guilty.

Sunny's relatives had hired private investigators to dig up evidence against Claus; Dershowitz found that repugnant, an abuse of privilege. As he works on, he begins to wonder whether their hatred and resentment of Claus hadn't led them to concoct evidence, either for revenge, or to cover up their own possible guilt.

There isn't much more to the movie than that. The only friction in the movie is between the warm-hearted professor and the chilly Claus, but that's overdone. Dershowitz is so warm and good

and positive, such a mensch, that you almost start warming to Claus; at least he isn't perfect.

Jeremy Irons is very good as Claus; he makes you feel the hidden depths behind the reserved, correct facade. When Dershowitz says rather scathingly to him: "From what I've seen of the rich, you can have them," Claus answers very quietly, "I do".

It gives you an inkling of what the rich (and utterly pointless, purposeless) life he and Sunny have led means to him; it's everything, and he isn't about to give it up. For all his hauteur, he's grimly determined to hang on to his privileges.

The film gives us a bit of Sunny's side, as well as Claus's. In a macabre twist, the film is partly narrated by the supposedly comatose Sunny from her lavish hospital room. But despite this, the film remains a very limited view of the case. Based as it is on Dershowitz's account, it reveals little of the truth of Sunny and Claus Von Bulow's marriage. The family forces at work against Claus are never more than sketched out; they remain very much in the background.

The film is about winning a case,



The real Claus Von Bulow — so *that's* what the rich get up to

nothing more. We haven't had 'the truth', just one version of it.

Also macabre is Sunny's fate. Comatose, possibly a vegetable, she still lives a pampered life — coiffed,

manicured, looked after with all the care that nearly a million dollars a year can buy. She may never wake.

Early on in the film, she talks of her life, of her daily patterns. "I

liked being in bed," she says, "I never much liked anything else." Whatever the truth behind Sunny's slipping into a coma, she got what she wanted — with a vengeance.

Trendy and fun but sick at heart

Television

Lilian Thompson ponders the return of *Twin Peaks*

The huckleberry pie and jelly doughnuts may still be dandy in 'Twin Peaks', but



David Lynch: "seems to get a kick out of women's degradation and pain"

that's about all.

David Lynch's sicko view of women, most evident in his treatment of Laura Palmer, the murdered teenager with the secret life, is downright misogynistic. It's nasty.

Lynch seems to think that sexually active women are degraded and tainted, and thus deserve to be

punished, even killed. If that weren't bad enough, he keeps telling us that death was what Laura wanted, that she was tired of herself, tired of her 'badness'. She wanted to die.

Unlikely? Yes. It smacks of that attitude so beloved of the tabloids — that women secretly want to be raped, that they 'ask for it'. But Lynch goes even further. For Lynch, women not only want to be raped, they want to be brutally murdered too! Jack the Ripper would probably agree, but can anybody else?

When Dr Jacoby puts this Laura-death-wish theory to FBI agent Cooper, Cooper (to his credit) answers him rather drily, "Laura Palmer did not commit suicide".

"No," says Jacoby, undaunted, "but maybe she allowed herself to be killed."

It's not only Jacoby who's come up with this offensive line. Both Laura's ex-boyfriends, James and Bobby, have said the same, that there was a badness in Laura that she couldn't control. Death was her only way out.

But what is this 'badness', exactly? Why do some girls feel it? Doesn't it come from failing to live up to the double standards society imposes, where a boy can sow wild oats and be proud of it, but any girl who copies him is a slut?

Doesn't it also come from constant undermining at home and at school, from physical and sexual abuse, from neglect, from all the accumulated deprivations that prevent girls developing self-confidence and self-love and which often drive them (as Laura seemed to be driven) to seek approval from men, to build their self-images through admiration and attention from men?

Isn't that a whole lot more likely than girls 'wanting' to be degraded, 'wanting' to be killed?

Lynch seems to get a kick out of women's degradation and pain. In Lynch's film 'Blue Velvet', Dorothy, the supposedly masochistic 'fallen woman', was horrifyingly abused, and contrasted unflatteringly with the blonde,

virginal Sandy. According to reports, Lynch repeatedly had to break off directing the scene where the demented Frank assaults Dorothy because he found it hysterically funny. Charming.

In his latest film, 'Wild at Heart', Lula, another 'loose' woman, was humiliated in a sickening scene that implied she was asking for rape. Lynch directs violence against women for kicks.

It isn't only Laura who cops the treatment in 'Twin Peaks'. Catherine Martell, the other 'loose' woman in the series, has just got her comeuppance, too, burned in the mill fire, as if she were a witch at the stake. A sorry end seems to be looming for Josie, who has seemingly 'gone bad'. Even Donna is getting in on the bad act — smoking, languishing glances, heavy breathing around James — with Lynch around, she should watch it.

But the men! There are two kinds of those. The men on the 'good' side, the side of the law, are clean — they're pure, innocent, not a whiff of testosterone amongst them. Even Sheriff Truman's wooing of Josie is tepid.

Cooper is the purest. His closest relationship is with is voice-activated tape recorder, his conduit to the mysterious, never-glimpsed Diane. Not even the sultry attentions of Audrey, eighteen going on thirty-eight, can tempt Cooper from the path of righteousness.

The bad guys — Leo, Jacques, Benjamin Horne — get all the hormones, but their fun is inextricably mixed up with evil-doing — drugs, brothels, sex with minors, rape, brutality. No shades of grey allowed.

Lynch's view of women is standard Old Testament. Women are the temptresses who bring men down, who degrade them and cause their ruin. To be a woman is to be damned. The message may be wrapped up in trendy images, and played slightly tongue-in-cheek, but Lynch's misogyny is deep-rooted, all-pervasive. 'Twin Peaks' may be watchable, a cult hit, and fun sometimes, but it's the wrath of God, revisited.

Two poems from the Falklands War by Gary Scott

Boys own crisis

A poem by the papers who supported 'our boys' during the Falklands war

It's war
40 warships ready
Paras are called up
Prince Andy to go
"Stand up for our boys" says Maggie
My heroes
The fearless ones
So gallant and glorious.

Battles rages in the air
Victory in the skies
Suicide pilots attack.
Our darkest hour
24 die as jets blitz two ships
The price of freedom
They gave their lives for freedom.
They died for Britain
Task force lads to get a medal

Fighting fund for our heroes.

Darwin, Goose Green captured
Salute to battling paras
Mrs T to act over fallen victims
The fallen may come back home.
Hero who gave his life — at 18
For our tomorrow he gave his today.
British troops hit the hills
Victory on Hell Hill
There's victory in the air
As the ring of steel closes on Stanley

Drink to our heroes
Have a skeg at how the forces say it
"How the booties yomped across the ulla
To get a skeg at the Argies".

Heroes on sea of fire
Bravery below the waves
Men leapt into sea to escape flames
Epitaph to the men on board Sir
Galahad
"It was a day of tragedy,
But I vouch it was also a day of

Extraordinary heroism and selflessness
By every man."
"Ordinary chaps but they make me
feel
So proud."

Bayonet troops charge ahead
Enemy routed by touch of cold steel.
Glory boys beat odds.
True heroes all
Our greatest military feat since
Agincourt
"We'll not be victims again."
Grim toll in lives
Defence spending likely to rocket
Where do we go from here?

During the Falklands crisis

If you were to have shouted "Peace!"
In a public place
You could have been arrested
For disturbing the war.

Poll tax activists meet

By Chris Croome

3D, a national network of independent poll tax activists within the All Britain Federation, met on Saturday (19 January), in Manchester, to discuss strategy, and the way forward for the movement over the coming year.

Many good positive ideas were put forward about ways to link the community groups with trade unions, and the setting up of workplace groups. To mark the first anniversary of the introduction of the poll tax, 3D activists agreed to float the idea of a one-day strike by council workers, and that if this was taken up it should be built around the slogan 'No cuts, no poll tax'.

There was a lengthy discussion of what the anti-poll tax movement should advise people to do with the financial inquiry forms sent out by councils following the serving of a liability order.

Not to return it is the only criminal offence that can be committed in the whole poll tax collection process, and a fine of £100 can be levied for not returning the form, £400 if you deface it!

It is a weak point in the procedure for authorities: wage arrestments are the only cost-effective way of getting money off non-payers, and without the information required by these forms, wage and benefit arrestments are not possible.

The councils are hoping that the threat of criminal charges, and a criminal record, will be enough to ensure forms are returned: but they cannot possibly prosecute — or imprison — everyone who refuses to return the forms.

The line from the All Britain Federation is to tell people to complete this form, but the majority of forms appear to be going straight in the bin! Only 0.3% of forms have been returned in Camden, for example. 3D will recommend that the forms are not returned, but

will point out to non-payers the possible consequences of this, as well as the high level of non-completion.

The need to pool, and distribute information on bailiffs was raised, as many firms operate in other regions than that in which they are based. This information, and

Resistance to poll tax grows in Southwark

By Chris Lawrence, Chair, Nunhead APTU

On 14 January Southwark Council entered its fourth round of prosecutions for non-payment by summoning 5,000 people.

On the three earlier occasions the council had summonsed about 150 people a time. Now, they were obviously panicked into 'number-crunching' by the level of non-payment in Southwark — one of London's poorest boroughs.

Those summonsed included Nicola Bridge, aged nine, and a baby of 18 months. About 2,000 people turned up to the court, packing the foyer.

Chants of "we're not paying the poll tax" were complemented by operatic arias from Hughie Gillespie, who was butler at No.10 to Wilson, Callaghan and Thatcher, before being forced to retire at 60 by Thatcher (62).

Jailed for a custard pie

Dressing up as Robin Hood and throwing custard pies might be regarded as a bit of fun — if it's comic relief week and you're doing it for charity.

If, however, you're an anti-poll tax protestor out to make a point, it becomes criminal assault and a jailable offence, as two campaigners from Nottingham discovered.

Guy Waddingham and Keith Duncombe were both jailed for one month for their part in the custard pie protest, which took place last year in the council chamber as the poll tax rate was being set.

Donations and letters of support can be sent to Box DF, 72 Radford Road, Hyson Green, Nottingham.



Demonstration in Nottingham. Photo: Rich Cross

other reports for the next newsletter, should be sent c/o Ilya, 72 Westgreen Road, Tottenham, London N15.

Summons mess

Nottingham City Council got itself into a mess when it tried to summons 2,000 people a day for poll tax default.

One of those who turned up to contest his case was at first told that he would not be allowed to enter the court. It seems the court has a policy of restricting entry to those over the age of 15. This particular 'non-payer', who turned up with his mum, was just two years old! The case was withdrawn. Needless to say, he's still not

Labour council plans to jail non-payers

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has immensely assisted resistance in Southwark: it has showed people that they are not alone and powerless, that solidarity is essential and possible, and that it is important to turn up at court when summonsed.

If they continue to summons people at this rate, 50,000 people will be called to court between now and April 1, when the new poll tax rate is enforced.

Anybody who lives in Southwark should contact the Southwark Law Project, East Dulwich Grove, on 081 299 1024, or the Southwark Federation on 071 703 2166.

The council is struggling with a 63% level of default and is desperate to issue as many liability orders as possible. Their eagerness has led to other mistakes, such as issuing liability orders against those whose cases have been adjourned or even withdrawn altogether.

However, the council's heavy attitude — mass summonses, wage arrestments, and the threat of bailiffs — has failed to dent the anti-poll tax campaign. Non-payment remains high.

released early, following a hastily organised demonstration in Grantham.

Pass this resolution in your Labour Party against this threat: This CLP/DLP/branch (1) Is appalled by the planned jailing of 37 poll tax non-payers by the Labour controlled council of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

(2) Calls on all Labour councils not to threaten, or start, committal proceedings against non-payers of the poll tax.

Socialists and the trade unions

A Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty weekend school

Saturday and Sunday, 9-10 February 1991
Mandela Building, Manchester Poly Students' Union, Oxford Road, Manchester.

Cost: £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged. More details: phone 071-639 7965, or write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Judge Loach as film maker

WRITEBACK

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



Ken Loach

I do not particularly agree with Sean Matgamna's criticisms (SO 471) of Ken Loach's politics (which is not to say that I particularly agree with Loach either!).

But there is a deeper point. Loach has made a film about

Northern Ireland. Its effectiveness should be judged first of all as a film. What Sean Matgamna is about seems dangerously close to Zhdanovism.

Charlie Murray
North London

Finance forms: what to do

In SO 470, 'Labour council threatens to jail non-payers', Chris Croome points out that not filling in financial information forms (sent out after the issuing of liability orders for poll tax non-payment) is a criminal offence, carrying the risk of a fine, and says therefore his campaign is advising people to complete the form.

Whilst this is true, some councils have decided not to pursue this issue through the courts at this stage (Nottingham city council is one of these). Even where councils have not taken such a deci-

sion, or are threatening to use the courts, they may have problems implementing it because of lack of court time due to non-payment cases.

Therefore some anti-poll tax campaigns are advising people not to fill in the forms, or to frustrate the process by instead sending back a list of questions (ie. 'Do deductions include trade union subs?'). Mass non-compliance can be a useful part of the campaign.

Therefore, if anyone receives one of these forms they should consult their local campaigns before deciding what to do.

Ivan Wels
Sherwood Anti-Poll Tax Campaign
Nottingham

A socialist policy for wars

It is only half true that "the fact, for example, that Lenin was for the defeat of Russia in 1914 in no way meant that he was for the victory of Germany" (Patrick Murphy, SO 471).

As Brian Pearce demonstrated in an article some 30 years ago, Lenin's arguments in the earlier part of World War 1 certainly contained the idea that the military defeat of Russia, in particular, was especially to be desired, and the idea that the military defeat of their own government was to be desired by socialists of all nations. He denounced Trotsky bitterly for arguing that socialists should desire "neither victory nor defeat", but simply the prosecution of the class struggle.

Pearce showed that in the later part of the war Lenin shifted to a position similar to that of Trotsky (and other Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg, who also opposed the war without using Lenin's formula of 'defeatism').

From the 1920s, however, the formula of 'defeatism' became a sacred principle in the new cult of 'Leninism'. The exigencies of factional struggle against the Stalinists did not allow Trotsky to write freely on the question, and he gave the formal title 'defeatism' to his policy on World War 2, although plainly he was not arguing that British or French socialists should desire the military defeat of Britain or France.

The formula 'defeatism or defeatism', I think, obscures

rather than clarifies thought, driving some socialists toward the idea that in war they must either be gung-ho for the military victory of their government or gung-ho for its military defeat.

'Defeatism' made some sense for the wars of the 18th and 19th centuries, when the military defeat of a country would mean the loss of colonies or outlying territories, and maybe adverse treaties, but not the oppression of its people. In the wars of the 20th century it rarely makes sense.

In the South Atlantic war, for example, it made sense to say that both in Argentina and in Britain the working class would benefit from the military defeat of its own government — its loss of credit, the blow to its imperialistic ambitions, etc. But what about the Iran-Iraq war? To oppose the war on both sides, to say it was a predatory war between rivals for the status of regional sub-imperial power, was one thing; to say that the military conquest of either country was to be desired is another.

As Patrick Murphy wrote: "the issues at stake in the conflicts between capitalist rulers are important only in so far as they affect the ability of the working class of all countries to organise, become self-conscious, overthrow their rulers and govern for themselves." The task of socialists in any war is to analyse the issues at stake and to prosecute the class struggle independently on that basis.

Colin Foster
London

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 24 January. 'Labour and the Gulf', Left Unity meeting. Newcastle Poly, 12.00

Thursday 24 January. 'Labour and the Gulf', Left Unity meeting. Teesside Poly, lunchtime.

Thursday 24 January. 'Ireland: Beyond the Slogans!', Socialist Organiser meeting. York University, 1.15

Thursday 24 January. 'Troops out of the Gulf', Socialist Organiser meeting. Nene College, 5.00

Thursday 24 January. Gulf debate at Newcastle University Labour Club, 1.00. Speakers Mark Osborn, NOLS

Thursday 24 January. Anti-war meeting, Leicester University, 1.30. Speakers include Mark Sandell

Thursday 24 January. Anti-war meeting, Crewe and Alsager college, 7.00. Speaker Mark Sandell
Thursday 24 January. 'Ireland: Beyond the Slogans!', Socialist

Organiser meeting. Packhorse Pub, Leeds, 7.30

Thursday 24 January. 'Do we need a revolution?', Canterbury Tech College, 5.00. Speaker Martin Thomas

Thursday 24 January. The Middle East conflict, Socialist Organiser meeting, UKC, 7.30. Speaker Martin Thomas

Friday 25 January. Debate on the Middle East, LSE, 1.00. Speakers John O'Mahony, Tony Greenstein
Friday 25 January. 'Socialist Feminism'. UCL Labour Club, 1.00. Speaker Janine Booth

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstration, Sheffield. Assemble Caborn's corner, 11.00

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstration, Birkenhead. Speakers include Tony Benn.

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstration, London. Assemble 12.00 Embankment, London. Called by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstration, Nottingham. Assemble 11.00, The Forest. Speakers include Bob Clay

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstrations, Newcastle. Assemble 12.00, Civic Centre

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstration, Canterbury. Assemble 1.00, Longport coach park. Speakers include CAWG

Saturday 26 January. Anti-war demonstration, Cardiff. Assemble 11.00, Sophia Gardens. Speakers include Bruce Kent

Tuesday 29 January. Anti-war meeting, Coventry Poly, 8.00. Speakers include Mark Sandell

Tuesday 29 January. Rally for workers' liberty, London School of Economics, 7.30. Speakers include Moshe Machover and Martin Thomas (SO)

Wednesday 30 January. Clause 25 protest meeting, Manchester Town Hall, 7.00. Speakers include Joan Lester

Wednesday 30 January. National student shut-down against the Gulf war

Wednesday 30 January. Student demonstration against the Gulf war, Manchester. Assemble 12.30, All Saints. Organised by MANUS

Wednesday 30 January. Anti-war meeting, West Sussex Institute, 7.30. Speakers include Mark Sandell

Saturday 9 February. Scottish Labour Party Socialists Con-

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

Saturday 16 February. 'A strategy for the Labour Left', London LPS conference, Camden Town Hall, 10.00-5.30.

Postal workers' general secretary supports management's right to victimise strikers:

UCW leaders abandon rank and file

By Pete Keenlyside, Manchester Amalgamated UCW

NO-one can accuse the Union of Communication Workers' leadership of being slow off the mark when it comes to the Employment Act 1990.

On 21 December, that is 11 days before the Act came into operation, they issued a special branch G11/19 to all branch secretaries. If you didn't notice the name of Alan Tuffin, UCW general secretary, at the bottom, you would have easily assumed that the circular came from management.

From 1 January 1991, so the circular tells us, it will be "unlawful for any official to excite or require any worker to break his employment contract by taking part in unofficial industrial action either in the form of a strike, or industrial action short of a strike, such as a ban on overtime or work to rule, that has not been authorised by a secret ballot and authorised by the executive council."

According to the circular, any union official who calls unofficial action "is in breach of the law. Is in breach of union rules," and "renders themselves liable to be dismissed by the employer without any appeal or recourse

to an industrial tribunal for compensation for wrongful dismissal. Render themselves and the union liable to damages from customers and the employer. Render themselves personally liable to any worker who is dismissed for taking part in unauthorised industrial action unpurported to be organised by them or by a union official."

In addition, "any union member who responds to a request to take part in industrial action which was not authorised by the executive council in a secret ballot render themselves liable to dismissal by the employer without recourse to an industrial tribunal for compensation for wrongful dismissal."

When it was drafted, the Employment Act 1990 was clearly aimed at unofficial action and local shopfloor activity. As the Post Office is the industry with the most unofficial strikes it is quite right that the executive council have brought the content of the Act to the membership's attention. But what are they proposing to do about it?

Give in, that's what. As far as they are concerned, the Employment Act 1990 "has now effectively abolished unofficial industrial action". In case anyone has still missed the point, the circular spells it out: "All UCW members are therefore instructed that they must not become involved in industrial action without a ballot on or after the 1st of January 1990."

The UCW leadership are

nothing if not traditional bureaucrats. What is important to them is the assets, particularly financial, of the union. That is, after all, what pays their inflated wages. Protecting these comes far above defending the membership in their list of priorities. Some of them may secretly welcome the act. Unofficial action is messy, and takes up a lot of time to sort out. Life becomes much easier if the only action allowed is that sanctioned by the executive.

After all, between 1971 and 1988, there was only one official strike.

Not surprisingly, the Post Office management have taken full advantage of what they term "a remarkable change of policy by the UCW". They have circulated the special circular to all local managers, and are crowing about how this could eliminate unofficial action. The management know full well that there is nothing in the Act that stops them from coming in and doing as they please. They are planning big changes this year in work practices and they must be hoping now that they can put these through with the minimum of opposition.

This is probably an over-optimistic view. But the stance of the UCW leadership leaves rank and file militants dangerously exposed. The management can and will try to use the act so they can victimise activists in the knowledge that the executive will wash their hands of the matter.

If we let them get away with this, it will throw the movement back 150 years. We must demand that the executive council give their full backing to any branch involved in industrial action and any member threatened with victimisation.

Motions should go to annual conference condemning the special circular, committing the UCW to the repeal of all Tory anti-union laws, and adopting of the workers' charter by an incoming Labour government.

The UCW Broad Left, despite its recent record of inactivity, should call a conference of activists to discuss the Act and how to give support to any of the membership that fall foul of it. If we can get organised, despite the efforts of our management and executive council, the Employment Act 1990 can be consigned to the dustbin where it belongs.



Postalworkers strike for the ambulance workers, 30 January 1990

'Sex pest' strike leader slams new Tory laws

The biggest unofficial action in the Post Office last year took place in Oxford when 2,000 workers — mainly men — went on strike against the sexual harassment of a woman cleaner by a male supervisor.

It was the biggest strike ever in the history of the British labour movement against sexual harassment. Solidarity action took place as far afield as Swindon and Northampton. The action ended after a week.

"If the victim of sexual harassment had not felt that the union would defend her then she would never have spoken out against the supervisor."

with the supervisor being transferred, rather than suspended, pending an inquiry.

Under the Employment Act 1990 this strike would have been completely illegal, and the branch officials liable to legal action and the sack for organising it. Under Tuffin's circular of 21 December the

UCW leadership would have totally disowned the strike and supported a management witchhunt of the 'ringleaders'.

Oxford UCW Uniformed Branch secretary Pete Boswell told us that he was "not impressed" by the stand taken by his union's executive.

"If we hadn't taken immediate strike action over the issue," said Pete, "then we wouldn't have been able to defend the woman in question."

"Strike action is our most effective weapon, and if management think that we can't use it then all our members will feel under threat. I'm sure that if the victim of harassment had not felt that the union could defend her then she would never have spoken out against the supervisor."

"Our action was totally justified. The Tories are trying to take away one of the most basic rights working people have — the right to withdraw our labour. This is a right our forebears fought for and nobody is justified in trying to take it away."

"It's tragic that we haven't heard a single solitary word against this from Norman Willis. The Tories praise the recent freedoms won in Eastern Europe but forget to say that none of that would have been possible without the Gdansk strikes — action that would be completely illegal under their anti-union laws."

Pete Boswell talked to Tom Rigby

PSA ballot: reject this deal!

By John Moloney

CPSA members are set to ballot this week in the long-running Property Services Agency (PSA) dispute over the retention of civil service working conditions.

The DoE Section Executive are recommending a 'yes' vote. What is on offer is a 'best endeavours' deal from management in which they promise to 'do their best' not to force staff into the new government-owned company set up to replace the PSA and to find workers other civil service jobs if they want them.

But without firm guarantees CPSA will have difficulties in seeing that all staff get alternative jobs and are not forcibly transferred.

Those recommending the deal argue that the membership don't have the stomach for a fight.

But this misses two points: firstly, we need to campaign to change minds. Secondly, if we don't believe we should change minds we should still tell the truth about this deal, some point it up and prettify it as, not union officials do.

If we keep this dispute going through this difficult patch by the end of March, things should have changed. We will know by then who has been accepted onto the scheme. We know from senior management that many people will be turned down. Staff will realise that they may be locked into the company. Then we may have a chance to fight, then we could get all members action.

Unfortunately, this counter-argument has been rejected. Activists' task therefore is to campaign for a 'no' vote. To start the ball rolling some branches have published a joint bulletin calling for such a vote.

DSS staffing strikes

The staffing strikes in the DSS continued this week with one more office, Streatham, joining the action.

That makes a total of 14 offices out on strike. At two of them, Bloomsbury and Wallasey, both NUCPS (super-visitory union) and CPSA (clerical union) members are out on strike. But at most it is only NUCPS members out.

There will be a national DHSS activists meeting on 16 February, called by the CPSA DHSS Broad Left where activists can get together to discuss a national strategy for the staffing crisis.

DSS National Activists Meeting

Saturday 16 February, 11.30
Merseyside Trade Union and Community Resources Centre, Hardman St, Liverpool

Called by CPSA DHSS Broad Left

Telecom left calls for 'Troops out of the Gulf'

By a central London BT engineer

Up to 300 people attended last weekend's meeting of the National Communications Union Broad Left.

The meeting dodged the issue of last year's disgraceful pay claim. Voting for a 'political discussion' of the issues involved thus avoiding censuring the BL supporters on the engineering

executive who voted for an effective pay cut of up to £3,000 a year for some engineers.

Unfortunately, the argument for 'unity at any price' was allowed to overtake the rational case for building a broad left that has some degree of accountability and ability to defend union members' interests.

On the positive side, the meeting voted to affiliate to the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf and called for US and British troops out of the Gulf. The meeting also urged BL activists to go out and build anti-war groups in their workplaces.

The spectre of unemployment

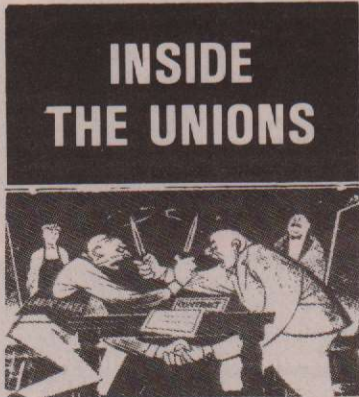
Last Thursday the latest unemployment figures were released, showing a rise of 80,400 to a total of 1.84 million for December. It was the fifth biggest increase on record and the worst since 1980/81.

Of course, events elsewhere ensured that these figures went almost unnoticed.

Nevertheless, most informed commentators are now predicting that unemployment will reach about 2.5 million by the end of the year. January's figures are expected to show the largest ever rise in unadjusted unemployment on record — an increase of about 150,000.

So far, rising unemployment does not seem to be having the devastating effect on shopfloor organisation and self-confidence that it did in the early-to-mid 1980s. So far, the bulk of the victims of the new recession have been in the service industries, banking and the media rather than the manufacturing sectors that were clobbered last time round.

The motor industry, in particular, has been able to partially offset the downturn in UK sales with a big export drive. And although Ford, Rover,



By Sleeper

Peugot and Jaguar have all recently announced redundancies, these have so far taken the form of 'natural wastage' and early retirement — not the drastic cut-backs and plant closures that characterised the late '70s and '80s.

Nevertheless, all the signs are that the recession will continue to spread from the growth sectors of the Thatcher

decade, into manufacturing. The Engineering Employers' Association has said that it expects 100,000 redundancies this year while the Building Employers Confederation is predicting over 200,000 sackings.

The official trade union movement has no strategy for dealing with mass unemployment — indeed, one of the chief victims of the TUC's recent 'economy package' was its 'services to the unemployed'. In so far as the union movement has woken up to the threat posed by mass unemployment and economic recession, its response has been to urge moderation in wage settlements: at Rolls Royce a meagre 5% pay offer has been recommended by officials and senior stewards, while at Carriers International (an electrical goods distributor in London), TGWU officials have recommended a six month wage freeze to give the company 'a chance to lift the business'.

If the experience of the 1980s shows anything, it is that moderating wage claims and taking a 'responsible' attitude towards the problems of the employers doesn't stop redundancies. If anything, it serves to further demoralise the rank and file and make a fight in defence of jobs more difficult.

But the basis for a real campaign in

defence of jobs does exist, and we don't have to look very far back to find it: the engineering unions' 1989-90 campaign for a shorter working week won a quite unexpected level of support and has succeeded in establishing the 37-hour week as the norm in engineering. The success of that campaign (which, ironically, has now been wound down by the AEU leadership 'because of the recession') gives us a pointer for how a real fight against unemployment could be organised. If basic hours were further reduced to 35 throughout the industry (the original demand of the Confed campaign), it could create an extra half a million jobs.

The problem, of course, is that hours reductions traditionally tend to get swallowed up by increased overtime working, rather than resulting in new jobs. In 1990, for instance, 13.6 million hours overtime were worked every week — the equivalent of 300,000 new jobs. So how do we stop overtime working? The answer's obvious, when you think about it for a moment: ensure that basic pay rates are adequate. That's why fighting unemployment and fighting for decent wages should not be counterposed. Unfortunately it's an argument that national union leaders and full-time officials seem incapable of grasping.

Hospitals pay the price of war

By a Manchester health worker

The NHS can cope," "we'll fund the NHS fully" — those are the phrases health

ministers use when questioned about how our hospitals will cope when wounded men are flown in from the Gulf.

They are lying! More and more doctors, nurses and other healthworkers are speaking out to tell the truth: the NHS can't cope!

The Department of Health knows that our hospitals won't be able to cope with the number of casualties with severe burns, or suffering the effects of chemical attacks. Secret reports show that leading doctors simply do not know how to treat chemical weapon injuries.

Health workers are saying that the NHS won't cope, that thousands of 'civilians' on hospital waiting lists will suffer — and some will die — because they will be denied treatment.

No-one who works in hospitals is saying "we won't treat the casualties", but a growing number are saying "we will work, but we want to stop this war".

Health workers know what this war will do to unknown thousands of people.

In Manchester, groups of 'Healthworkers against the war' have already sprung up in local hospitals. A North Manchester hospital's group got over 150 to its meeting last week.

Another group, in central Manchester, has met several times, and is producing leaflets and petitions against the war.

As well as outright opposition to the war, the groups are facing up to the threat war poses to health workers themselves.

The Ministry of Defence (Liaison Officers) in the main receiving hospitals will start directing staff in their work. Possibly they will try to decide who is and who isn't treated, and in what order.

"We must demand that neither hospital workers nor NHS patients pay the price of this war."

Staff will be pressurised, or ordered, to work long and unsafe hours. Some central Manchester nurses have already been told to work permanent 12-hour on, 12-hour off shifts. There is a growing mood to refuse, and to demand more staff so as to cope.

Above all, there is a threat that staff who oppose the war, who criticise the arrangements for dealing with casualties, or who simply point out the impossible situation our hospitals are being forced into will be pilloried and disciplined.

Healthworkers' campaign groups need to start pressuring their trade unions to oppose the war, and while the war is going on, to protect their members from its effects.

If any emergency measures are needed, they should be under the control of the workforce and medical staff.

Our hospitals should not come under the control of army or Ministry of Defence-appointed medical dictators.

But there is a 'positive' side! Long demanded, and long resisted, improvements like 24-hour canteens, longer opening hours for staff nurseries, and easy access to medical supplies are now suddenly being paid for in Manchester hospitals...but only 'for the duration'.

That the heartless accountants who run the NHS need to make some concessions to the staff shows they are feeling the strain and can be put under further pressure by the workers.

We must demand that neither hospital workers nor NHS patients pay the price of this war. Partly that means demanding that the government funds the NHS so it can work properly.

Above all, it means resisting this war.

They are lying about civilian dead

"The effects of bombing will mean many more casualties than the Allies' claim of 100"

By Matt Cooper

US and UK politicians have made the claim that less than 100 Iraqi civilians have been killed, despite 8,000 Allied bombing missions having dropped 50,000 tons of high explosives on Iraq in the first five days of war.

The military press relations men have put up jovial officers to show high-tech video shots of high-tech bombs being guided by lasers into small openings in bunkers. This, they say, is a 'clever and surgical war', hard on Iraq's military, gentle on Iraq's people.

If we accept the US estimate that 80% of bombs go on target, that leaves 20% or 10,000 tons of high explosive which don't...

But there is reason why we should not accept these claims but treat them as propaganda. They do not, as they claim to, have an infallible technology. The main bombing is being carried out by US F1-11s and A-6s, which raided Libya in 1986. In Libya a high proportion of the bombs were widely off target!

The US new 'secret weapon', the F-117A 'Stealth' bomber was used in Panama last year. The 2,000lb bombs were not delivered on target. If this happens in highly prepared one-off bombing runs why should intensive bombing be any more accurate? It is much less likely to be accurate, not more.

And now, the US is increasingly using carpet bombing in which the huge B-52 bomber flying at high altitude drops free fall bombs over a broad area.

There are another set of reasons why the figure of 'less than 100' Iraqi civilians doesn't ring true — the effect of bombing nuclear and chemical installations. On Monday the US claimed to have hit Iraqi nuclear installations. Since the only Iraqi nuclear power station was destroyed before it was finished by Israel in 1981, this almost certainly means two research reactors at Tuwaitha, cleared by the international nuclear watchdog as non-military, and being used for civil research (although there is a possibility of uranium enrichment plants in disused mines).

The bombing of these small scale reactors will not be Chernobyl, but it will have dire local consequences.

The worst source of civilian casualties is likely to be the bombing of the Samara chemical weapons plant: this is spread over an area of 25 square km north of Baghdad.

Estimates suggest that Samara turns out about four tons of tabin,

one of the most lethal nerve gases, and ten tons of mustard gas a month. If bombed, as the US have claimed, the results could be terrible. Firstly, the plant is close to the Holy City of Samara, last known population around 70,000.

Samara is on the banks of the River Tigris upstream of Baghdad, the Tigris being the main source of drinking water. The Samara plant is also close to the huge inland lake of Milch Tuarthar which supplies water for drinking and irrigation.

There have been precedents which suggest what the result of this might be. In 1943 an Italian warship in the Port of Bari carrying 100 tons of mustard gas was destroyed, the toxic cloud which resulted killed over 1,000 civilians. More recently an eight-hour leak of gas in Bhopal caused thousands of deaths.

Nerve gas is infinitely more lethal than the gas at Bhopal. Modern war, like all war, is not the antiseptic fiction that the propaganda merchants would have us believe.

Thousands of Iraqi kids will die!

By Emma Colyer, NUS National Secretary (personal capacity)

It has long been known that "war is hell". Civilians die in war not only from bombs and bullets, but also — and sometimes mainly — from the diseases that go with war.

The Allied bombers are deliberately ruining Iraq's water supply. That will lead — at least — to a mass eruption of diarrhoeal disease. Adults can survive this: it kills children.

The way things are going in Iraq it will kill unknown thousands of children.

Even without the bombs and the destruction they are bringing, Iraq already has an appalling level of infant mortality from such diseases. The state sustains an inflated military apparatus



Victim of the Iran-Iraq war. Many thousands will be wounded and will die in this war

and has other things to spend money on. So in 1986 Iraq's infant mortality rate was on a par with that suffered in the poorest countries on earth — 71 per thousand (in the US it is about 10 per

1000).

Now it will go up like one of George Bush's sky rockets!

There is more than one form of biological warfare.

No deportations, no internment

By Chris Croome

Sheffield Branch NALGO has launched a campaign against the deportation or internment of Iraqis in Britain.

This was sparked off when an Iraqi member was visited by the Special Branch and threatened with deportation. The NALGO member

has lived in Britain for 9 years and originally fled Iraq to escape the regime of Saddam Hussein and the war with Iran.

The policy of internment and deportation by the British government is designed to whip up an atmosphere of racism and anti-Arab chauvinism and must be opposed. For leaflets, petitions and information about the campaign contact Sheffield NALGO on 0742 736307.

Fund at 54% of target

£50 from a reader in Nottingham brings our total to date towards our

£25,000 fund target to £13,572. We're also promised money on the way from a jumble sale

organised by SO supporters in Newcastle.

Anti-war activity is taking up the time of most SO readers, but it's important that fund-raising doesn't lose out. We need the money in order to be able to continue to get the anti-war message out, in the pages of SO, in leaflets, and through sending speakers to meetings.

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

Spread the anti-war message!

Our coverage of the anti-war protests across the world in last week's Socialist Organiser gave a special boost to sales. It was information that readers could find nowhere else.

This week we have shifted our print schedule one day earlier to help with sales by giving more sales opportunities at the end of the week. Make sure you organise extra sales in your area to take advantage of this!