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Labour's anti-war voice

Labour must:

An open letter to Neil Kinnock by Eric Heffer MP

As you know, I am not able to attend Parliamentary Labour Party meetings owing to my illness. I have, therefore, decided to write this open letter to you to express my opposition to your policy in supporting the government over the Gulf war.

This is the hypocrites' war for oil and if allowed to continue could engulf the whole of the Middle East, destroy the environment and cause massive carnage and bloodshed, killing thousands of innocent men, women and children. And all because of imperialist policies pursued by President Bush, egged on originally by Mrs Thatcher.

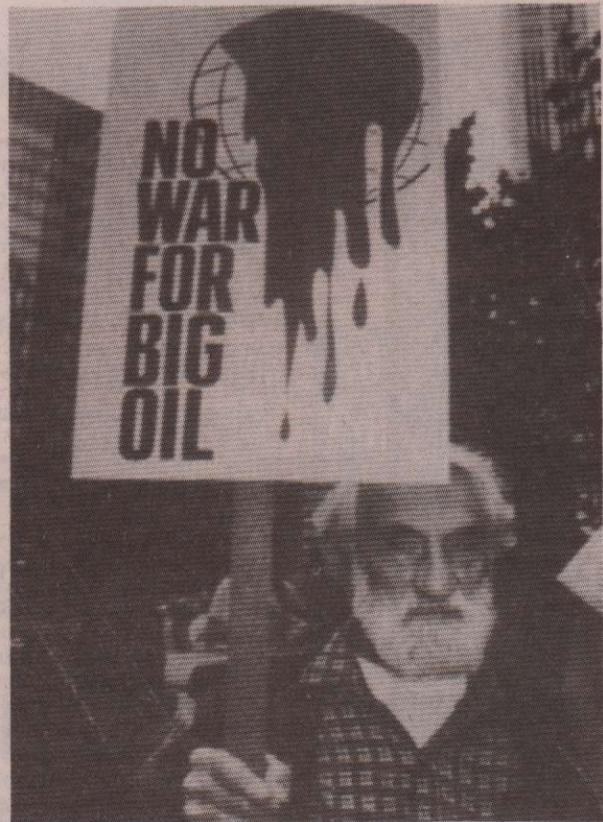
The UN resolutions fall short of calling for force. It was clear, however, that once the gauntlet was thrown down, Saddam, a brutal dictator was not given any way out and reacted accordingly. Instead of going along with the bellicose, aggressive policies of Bush and the British government, Labour should have been seeking such a way out.

Although late in the day, I was very pleased that you called for a longer period for sanctions to work before the fighting began, but very disappointed at your prompt support for the government once force was used. Naturally, we are all concerned about our service personnel, especially those of us who spent years in the forces during the 1939-45 war.

I want our party to be calling for a ceasefire, so that serious talks can take place urgently. To that extent, with reservations, I welcome the ceasefire proposals coming from the USSR and the USA. Part of such talk must include a Middle

Turn to back page

Opppose this war!



Millions protest worldwide

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

Millions for war, the sick sent to die

By Thomas Macara

Britain is spending £30 million a day on the Gulf war.

Maureen Kendrick, a 52 year old woman with two children, has been sent home to die from a Manchester hospital which says it can't afford to pay £3000 for drugs which may keep her alive!

In that contrast you have Tory Britain fully summed up



and unanswerably condemned.

Maureen Kendrick has cancer in her one kidney, but her life could perhaps be saved by the new drug Interleukin 2. In trials it has had a success rate of one in three. But management at Manchester's Christie Hospital say they cannot provide the drug because they are already overspent on this year's drug budget.

Her doctor says that legal action may be taken. Meanwhile, Maureen Kendrick, who had the drug prescribed last November, says: "I am now just putting my affairs in order".

It is high time Britain put its affairs in order!

Yugoslavia slides towards military crackdown

By Steven Holt

Following the failure of talks between the leaders of Yugoslavia's six republics last week, it seems increasingly likely that the Serbian and Stalinist-controlled army will be used against the increasingly independent northern republics of Croatia and Slovenia.

Since the victory of right-wing pro-independence parties in the elections held a year ago in Croatia and Slovenia, tension between these republics and the most powerful southern republic, Serbia, has increased greatly.

Ever since the formation of the Yugoslav state after the first world war (by union of Serbia and Montenegro with

areas formerly administered by the Austro-Hungarian empire) intercommunal tensions have tended towards the break-up of the country. During the last world war Yugoslavia was broken up by the Axis forces, who used nationalist feeling to set up fascist states in Croatia and Montenegro.

After the war Tito attempted to impose a federal structure in which the six republics and two autonomous regions were all represented. But, as before, real power lay with the army and the Serbian rulers.

From the 1970s on, the desire of the Albanian population in the Kosovo autonomous region for self-rule has led to many violent clashes, with tanks being used to suppress demonstrations against Serbian rule.

The main source of tension in the current row between the northern republics and Serbia is the vastly greater wealth of the northern republics, Slovenians enjoy a standard of living comparable to the less well-off areas of Western Europe. This has encouraged Croats and Slovenes to seek independence from the Yugoslav federation and closer economic links with Austria, Italy, Germany and Hungary.

The Serbian minority within Croatia has responded by declaring its own independence in some areas within Croatia, and nationalists of both communities have set up border controls, stopping trains and otherwise damaging the already weak Yugoslav economy.

To coincide with the start of the American-led war against Iraq, the military and the Serbian nationalist Stalinist leader Milosevic have demanded that Croatia and Slovenia disband their armed militias.

Socialists should support the right of the nations in Yugoslavia to independence, while insisting on the democratic rights of minorities such as the Serbs in Croatia and Kosovo.

From apartheid to racist capitalism

By Anne Mack

At last the South African government has stated its intention to abolish the pillars of apartheid, including the infamous Population Registration Act which classified people according to their 'racial group'.

All the pieces are now in place for the South African government to go ahead at some stage into the not too distant future with elections under a common voters' roll that will involve all South Africans.

These changes represent an

attempt at 'reform from above' under the pressure of a powerful movement for change from below.

The problem for the liberation movement is that the old security forces are still in place and the harassment of opposition activists continues. De Klerk has picked his time and appears to be dictating the pace and nature of events.

As Nelson Mandela put it: "the most obstinate obstacles to free political activity remain", including detention without trial and the internal security act, "suggesting a reluctance on the government's part to relinquish the inordinate power it wields."

These latest changes were inevitable once the

government decided to embark on serious negotiations with the ANC. They do not mean that the old white ruling class is about to surrender power or commit class suicide.

These are real and fundamental changes, however. All those on the South African left who deny that simply condemn themselves to irrelevance. The de-racialisation of South African civil life does not, however, mean the end of racism or white privilege. We can expect the hidden hand of the capitalist market to keep whites on top.

For instance, a recent survey into racial segregation in housing found that Washington DC was much more effectively segregated

on racial lines than Johannesburg! There's a model there for De Klerk and reassurance for the white right.

The mighty South African workers movement must mobilise now to regain the advantage. Last week a 20,000 strong demonstration in down town Cape Town, calling for immediate elections to a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution, was attacked by the police.

This call for a constituent assembly is backed by the million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions. If they rally their members on this demand COSATU can build a mighty mass movement that could take the initiative away from De Klerk.



Factional battles in the black townships have been made worse by police intervention

Iranian oilworkers strike for wages

Yadullah Khosroshahi spent 31 years as an oil worker in Abadan and Tehran. He spent 4½ years in jail under the Shah for leading a strike. In 1979 he was freed by the revolution. From 1981 to 1986 he was in jail again for organising a strike under Khomeini's regime. He was one of the three main oil worker leaders until his escape from Iran to Pakistan, then Britain. He tells the news that has just reached him about mass Iranian oil workers' strikes.

From 29 December oil workers in Iran began a four-day hunger

Women oppose Para 16

By Janine Booth

100 women students from over 50 colleges attended the NUS women's campaign 'A Woman's Place is in her Union' event in London on Tuesday 5 February.

Sessions included women and AIDS, welfare, fighting racism, safety, reproductive rights, and further education.

A Left Unity fringe meeting on the issue of Paragraph 16 attracted 30 women.

strike. It started in Abadan and spread to other cities. Then the workers went on strike for two weeks. All Iran's 200,000 oil workers were on strike.

The workers demanded more money (tied to inflation), better housing and rations (sugar, oil and rice). They wanted permanent contracts for oil workers.

The strikers were breaking the law — the penalty is death. The regime could not arrest the leaders, they did not know who they are. The strike was led by the most respected workers. Obviously they cannot put up picket lines, they go to work but when they are there do not do their jobs.

There is no centralised strike leadership. The protest is spreading through word of mouth and family and home town links.

The Iranian National Oil Company is a nationalised company. The state has brought in the Pasharan to the plants to intimidate the workers.

The oil workers believe that the Gulf crisis has provided an opportunity to strike. The government is split and in debt.

Most of the workers are opposed to the state religion and are sympathetic to the Kurds and opposed to the war.

The workers may well

strike again, their demands have not yet been met. Solidarity work is being coordinated by: Iranian Refugee Workers Association, Lambeth TUC Centre, 14 Thornton St, London SW9 9BL. Phone: 071 733 5135, Thursdays. Send messages of support and donations (cheques to IRWA).

Scots Labour debates PR

By Ian McCalman

The majority of resolutions from CLPs on electoral reform for Labour's Scottish Conference 1991 are opposed to it.

George Foulkes, the Ayrshire MP, is to the fore in bringing together the forces opposed to PR.

It may well be that these are no more than the death throes of the anti-PR lobby. For the Scottish Labour Party to reverse its commitment to the findings of the Scottish Constitutional Convention now would be an electoral gift to its political rivals, especially the SNP.

Moreover, the Labour

leadership in Scotland believes that it has little to fear from PR for a Scottish Assembly. The strength of Labour at the polls in Scotland is such that it would still have an overwhelming majority of seats in an Assembly.

Yet many leaders in the Party in Scotland and south of the border are increasingly uneasy about the implications of PR in a Scottish context for the Westminster set up. It may well be feared that disillusion with Labour could lead under PR to the formation of what Richard Kuper referred to as "a credible alternative party".

As the prospect of a Scottish Parliament looms larger, the tensions within the Labour Party in Scotland and throughout the UK may well become more acute on the issue of PR.

Police censor anti-war slogans

An alarming turn was taken on the anti-war demonstration of 2 February when the police stopped a section of the march on chanting pro-Iraqi slogans.

Alistair Green was one of a group from the Spartacist League chanting "Defeat British/US imperialism!" and "Defend Iraq!" Police told them to stop or they would be arrested under the Public Order Act. They didn't, and Green was pulled into a police van and bashed in the mouth by a police helmet.

He has since been charged with "obstructing a police officer" and "threatening behaviour".

If the organisers of the anti-war demonstrations allow, without protest, the cops to determine what slogans can and cannot be shouted on the peace marches, then a day may come the police will decide that slogans like "Peace" and "Stop the bombings!" are a breach of the peace too.

Freedom is indivisible.

Take the fight against the war into the Labour Party

Kinnock the hawk

Since the start of the Gulf crisis Neil Kinnock has said repeatedly that he supports setting the destruction of Iraq's military power as the aim of the British-US deployment in the Gulf.

He said it at the Labour Party conference last October, and he has said it in Parliament. Last week he publicly rebuked Labour front-bencher John Prescott for saying that the US-British war aims should be limited to re-taking Kuwait, and then got Labour's National Executive to back him.

In our opinion it will be a good thing indeed if the people of Iraq hang Saddam Hussein like Mussolini, upside down by his ankles, dead in a Baghdad street. But it is a different matter altogether for the armies and air forces now at war with Iraq to destroy its government and to make it impossible for Iraq in the future to be the military power it is now.

That will probably require that the Allied armies fight their way through Kuwait and into Iraq, and that they occupy Iraq. *Certainly* such war aims demand that the Allies keep on bombing Iraq until they destroy its basic social functioning.

Iraq has already been subjected to the greatest air blitz in world history. It may take ten years to recover from what has already been done to it.

For the US and Britain to make sure of stopping some future Iraqi regime developing the fearsome weaponry Saddam Hussein built up, they will have to destroy much of Iraq's industrial capacity. Otherwise industry can be switched back with relative ease to producing poison gas and, maybe, nuclear weapons.

That is one of the oldest socialist arguments against the pacifist cure-all of "disarmament" — rearming is relatively easy. It was a *disarmed* Germany that Hitler took over in 1933. Japan is now virtually disarmed. It could become a great military power in a few years.

So the systematic destruction of Iraq's industry and much of its social infrastructure is what the US and British forces are doing now. It is what they intend to do.

And the one-time professional "left-winger" and semi-pacifist Neil Kinnock tells them they have his approval to keep on pounding away!

Kinnock and his friends must know that it is a thin fiction to pretend that civilians are not being targeted. If, as the US commanders admit, US "friendly fire" is killing US soldiers, what is their "unfriendly fire" likely to be doing to the Iraqi civilians living near or working in the factories, rail depots and so on which are being targeted because of their military impor-

tance?

The systematic destruction of a society's infrastructure, down to the supply of water — without which thousands of Iraqi babies are likely to die of diarrhoeal diseases — is inescapably a targeting of civilians. Iraq's capacity to wage war cannot be destroyed until much of existing Iraqi society, and a large number of the people of Iraq, are destroyed. Anyone who says otherwise is either a liar or a fool or both.

How far the Allies go will be determined by many factors, among them pressure from the anti-Iraqi Arabs. *In so far as it has any pressure to exert, the Labour Party exerts it on the side of the Allied hawk faction.*

Make no mistake about it, this is a stupid and inevitably self-defeating policy — unless it is pursued *all the way* to the destruction and dismemberment of Iraq.

Anything less will build up hatred and resentment and the desire for revenge. And, in the Arab world, those feelings will not be confined to Iraqis. Saddam Hussein has

"It is the socialist Eric Heffer who represents the real Labour Party on this question, not the turncoat Neil Kinnock!"

already been boosted in the eyes of millions of Arabs. Iraqis are being driven to support Saddam.

Even the right-wing social democratic parties of Europe mostly have a better position on this issue than the Labour Party leaders. Kinnock and his friends have sold their souls to the Tories, and now can make a pretence of being independent only by being on the extreme wing of the war party!

Even Denis Healey, the one-time Stalinist chilled 40 years ago into the very model of a right-wing Cold Warrior, is nearer socialism and humanity than death-knell Neil!

Eric Heffer, a former chair of the Labour Party, has written an open letter to Neil Kinnock, which we print on page 1 this week. It is the socialist Eric Heffer who represents the real Labour Party on this question, not the turncoat Neil Kinnock! It is the tens of thousands of Labour Party members and supporters who have taken to the



Iraqi refugee clutches a bag of food at a Jordanian refugee camp

streets against the war who represent the real spirit of Labour, not Neil Kinnock!

It is those who organise now to regenerate the Labour Left, and to set it to work to challenge Kinnock and the National Executive, who represent Labour. Neil Kinnock is betraying the Labour Party.

The anti-war campaigners also represent the future of the Labour Party. The Tories may call a "victory" election in June — if the war is over by then — to cash in on war fever and to get the election over

with before the economic slump gets even deeper. And then Neil Kinnock is likely to get his reward for his present outright betrayal of the interests of the labour movement — another lost election. That would be a great tragedy for the working class and the labour movement.

The Labour Left now has a chance to turn the tide of defeat and decline which has held us in its folds for much of the '80s, and to recompose itself. Kinnock will face his day of reckoning, and sooner

than he thinks. The left must prepare.

Take the fight against war into the Labour Party! Support and build "Labour Against the War"!

Capitalism without apartheid

AS WE WERE SAYING

Is capitalism possible without apartheid in South Africa? In a sense it's the wrong question. Theoretically we can argue it until the cows come home.

What we have to be warned against is that certainly capitalism without apartheid is what a lot of people are trying to establish.

Whether it is in fact established will be determined not theoretically, but in practical politics.

The Progressive Federal Party and the capitalists are putting forward a definite anti-apartheid position.

It's just not pro-socialist and not pro-democratic. They want a kind of federal power-sharing which will guarantee private enterprise.

A lot of people say that the government is just perpetuating the old apartheid system under a slightly new guise. I think that's probably right so far, but if suffi-

cient pressures are put on the government I wouldn't put it past them to pursue a programme of reforms to a point where the major planks of apartheid are eroded. In its place you'd have a military-bureaucratic dictatorship, partially de-racialised, that offers us nothing at all, no improvement on apartheid.

We have to be aware that there are kinds of 'anti-apartheid' that have nothing to do with democracy and nothing to do with socialism.

Bob Fine, Socialist Organiser, October 1985

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk: 071 639 7965
Latest date for reports: Monday

Editor: John O'Mahony
Published by WL Publications Ltd,
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Printed by Tridant Press, Edenbridge
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated

GRAFFITI

George Bush and radical chic

GRAFFITI

Emiliano Zapata must be turning even faster in his grave.

In the late '40s, this Mexican revolutionary and anti-imperialist rebel had his name taken by a Yanqui from a rich Wall Street family for his new oil company — "Zapata Oil".

Now that same Yanqui is prosecuting a huge and murderous war for oil in the Middle East. His name is George Bush.

Marchers on some recent anti-war demonstrations have heard appeals to join "anti-imperialist contingents" where the call will be for "victory to Iraq".

In case they should feel they are isolating themselves by joining these contingents, they are told that on the contrary they will be united with "millions of workers across the Arab world" who are marching for the same slogans.

A closer look at some of the pro-Iraq demonstrations in Arab countries suggests that this international solidarity is not quite as progressive as you might think. In Algiers there was indeed a huge pro-Iraqi demonstration on 31 January. It was called by the Islamic fundamentalists. According to the Paris daily *Le Monde*, a keynote speaker proclaimed the following slogans while an Israeli flag was burned: "Death to the Christians! Death to the Jews! Death to France, Britain and the United States! Death to the traitors who have sold the holy places to the Christians!"

The Algerian left has also demonstrated against the US-led coalition in the Gulf — but separately from the fundamentalists and, unfortunately, in smaller numbers.

An odd little advertisement headed 'In Defence of Democratic Rights' appeared in the *Guardian* on 26 January.

A list of signatories had taken the ad "to place on record our opposition to the public labelling of Corinna Lotz as an 'agent provocateur' by her former political co-workers Vanessa Redgrave, Corin Redgrave and other members of the International Committee of the Fourth International".

The story behind this ad, so we understand, is as follows. In 1985 the Workers' Revolutionary Party — long crazy and dependent on money from Libya and Iraq — blew apart when its leader Gerry Healy was accused of sexual abuse of young women members.

From the ensuing flurry of splits emerged a small group of diehard Healy loyalists, headed by the Redgraves and under the names

"Marxist Party" and "International Committee of the Fourth International".

Healy died last year. Now the Greek associates of the Redgrave camp have claimed that he was poisoned; and a special issue of the "Marxist Party" magazine has carried announcements of an inquiry into Healy's death and (separately) of proceedings against Ms Lotz. The special issue is not on general sale, and does not carry the Redgrave names, perhaps as a safeguard against legal action.

Hence yet another split, signalled by the ad.

That such secret-agent mania and paranoia should go under the name of Marxism is annoying, but sadly not new. The affair is of interest to more people than devoted crank-sect watchers for another reason.

Among the signatories to the *Guardian*, most of them apparently Healyites, figures Ken Livingstone MP. Livingstone was also a speaker at Healy's memorial meeting, and his speech features in the issue of the Marxist Party journal currently on sale.

That cranks have their quarrels and their crazy allegations about each other is one thing. That someone involved in that skulduggery — and Livingstone has been associated with the unsavoury world of the Healyites at least since 1981, when he gave his name to *Labour Herald*, a paper produced on Healy's presses with a Healyite managing editor — that such a person should be accepted as a central and respected figure in Labour's broad left is another.

The Italian Communist Party, the biggest CP in the western world, officially disappeared last weekend.

It dissolved and refounded itself as the "Party of the Democratic Left" (PDS).

This move, however, has not solved the party's problems. Its opposition to the Gulf war, and its call for the withdrawal of Italian forces, is challenged by a right wing within the party, and diehards are planning to continue under the name "Communist Party".

Recession hits in the most unlikely places. Although even the Gulf war cannot deprive them of their front-page coverage, kiss-and-tell merchants are feeling the pinch.

According to the *Independent* (5 February), Sally Ann Lason, whose juicy tale about an affair with Princess Di's brother occupied the first five pages of the *News of the World* last Sunday, was paid only £5,000.

The same story two or three years ago would apparently have "earned" £50,000, or about as much as five years' hard work brings in the for average person.

Will America rule the world after the Gulf war? No doubt George Bush hopes so.

But superior military technology tends to lose out, in the long term, to superior industrial technology — and figures in the *Economist* magazine (26 January) indicate that America is still losing ground industrially.

American factories have only 37,000 robots installed — whereas Japanese factories have between 175,000 and 275,000. And Japanese and European companies dominate the manufacture of robots, too.

20 to 50 times the size of the Exxon Valdez spill

The eco-disaster rolls on

By Les Hearn

The world's biggest oil slick is temporarily becalmed in waters some distance off the Saudi Arabian coast. But it is expected soon to start clogging up the Saudi desalination plants.

This could be disastrous to the allied troops, who depend on the plants for fresh water.

It seems that the protective booms across the plants will be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the oil.

The volume of the slick is now thought to be between 5

and 12 million barrels, making the 250,000 barrels of the Exxon Valdez look very small beer. The figure of 12 million barrels represents the total capacity of the storage tanks at Mina al-Ahmadi in Kuwait, which were emptying into the Gulf until allied bombers hit the pipelines to the quays. Then, computerised stopcocks automatically shut off the flow.

It would, of course, be possible to repair this damage and start the oil flowing again. However, it would probably then just soak into

the sand and fill the ditches around the oil terminal. All ready for setting fire to!

So far, the giant slick has not polluted the shores, so oil-coated cormorants and shags filmed near Khafji were probably victims of Iraqi shelling of a Saudi oil refinery.

Oil spills are common in the Gulf and, because the area is almost land-locked, it can take three to five years for the slicks to be washed out into the Indian Ocean. In contrast, it takes only one month for Prince William Sound, site of the Exxon

Valdez spill, to be flushed out into the Pacific.

So far, little has been done to deal with the effects of oil pollution, apart from the protective booms around desalination plants. Little can be done to stop the oil slick coming ashore in some place or another, but protective booms and skimmers could save some of the smaller of the more important wildlife sites.

Volunteers going out to try to wash the oil off of seabirds would be wasting their time. Probably 99% of the birds will die anyway.

The Sun's private war

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

While military and civilian casualties mount in the Gulf, the *Sun* continues to wage its own private war in the factories and offices of Britain.

For the benefit of those of you who choose not to spend 25p a day on the paper that backs Our Boys, here is the story so far: the *Sun* reproduced large quantities of posters, T-shirts, shopping bags and (now) stickers bearing the Union Jack with a squaddie's head in the middle.

In factories and offices throughout the land, these Union Jacks have been causing trouble — especially where Muslim and other Asian people work alongside white people.

Under normal circumstances displaying a Union Jack at work would be a fairly harmless (if slightly naff) thing to do. But these are not normal circumstances. The *Sun's* flag carries with it a clear implication: anyone who won't 'fly the flag' is a traitor and a potential fifth-columnist, especially if they're a Muslim.

The *Sun* has now turned its attention to an old favourite target: 'Loonie Left' councils. 'Harlow (the 'Town that Shames Britain') was last week 'stormed' by a convoy of *Sun* 'patriots' who 'rolled into town with a parade of military vehicles and Page Three Lovelies decked out in the *Sun's* Union Jack T-shirts'.

The cause of all this excitement we were told, was Harlow Council's attempt to 'ban' *Sun* flags and its alleged threat to sack employees who defied the 'ban'. Now, I know as well as the next *Sun* reader that left Labour councils are quite capable of doing clumsy, bureaucratic and counter-productive things at times.

But a close reading of the *Sun's* Harlow story produces not one shred of evidence that the council ever attempt-

The lie machine



For the *Sun*, young Americans or British people in uniform are "heroes" and "young lions"; young Iraqis are "hordes" and "beasts".



"In our thoughts today: the oppressed people of Harlow", reads the motto under the masthead. Harlow's Labour council has told two workers to take down a Union Jack displayed on a portakabin because it might cause road accidents. The next day, the *Sun* sent an "invasion" of flag-wavers to Harlow — and caused a council van to crash into a taxi. The blitzed people of Baghdad, or the gassed people of Iraq's Kurdish villages, of course figure nowhere in the *Sun's* thoughts.



This Monday the *Sun* front page took a break from the Gulf war for something it reckoned more important: "another Royal exclusive".



If it had been US troops, not Iraqis, attacking against the odds, then the headline would have been "Heroes", not "Cowards!" And imagine the tabloid headlines if they could get a story that most Iraqi deaths were due to their own forces' fire.

ted to 'ban' *Sun* posters of the Union Jack let alone threaten employees with the sack. Indeed, tucked away in the paper's coverage is a quote from Council Chairman Sid Warner saying, "it is without foundation to say staff will be disciplined if they fly the Union Jack".

But, as ever, facts aren't allowed to get in the way of a good 'Loonie Leftie' story.

After all, the *Sun* could find a BR worker (who "didn't want to be named in case he got fired") saying:

"I think the *Sun* article was absolutely brilliant. It's about time someone tackled the **** Communists that run Harlow council".

The BBC's ludicrous ban on such subversive material as the film

Schwarzkopfballs

Readers are invited to submit quotations culled from the propaganda about the Gulf war. The following are from ITN:

- ...Of marines killed by their own side —
- "These troops were killed by friendly fire"
- ...Of the allied air forces —
- "We have air supremacy in the skies"
- ...Of a dead air-crew and a shot down plane —

"Another Tornado has been lost over Iraq"

- ...Of a bombed Iraqi clinic —
- "A non-military target"
- ...Of reporting restrictions to stop British journalists revealing details of Iraqi military plans —
- "Censorship"
- ...Of British censorship —
- "Reporting restrictions to ensure that allied military organisational matters are not discussed"



Vanessa Redgrave

Resist this war!

Student anti-war movement calls day of action February 20

Welfare not warfare!



By Emma Colyer and Mark Sandell

The Student Federation Against the Gulf War is on the move. At our committee meeting last week our network of college and area representatives took a

number of decisions for action.

We are picketing the Home Office on Wednesday 6 February to protest against the racist deportations and detentions of Iraqi and other Arab people. The picket is at 12 noon in Queen Anne's Gate, London.

We are building for a national "Welfare not

Warfare" day of action on Wednesday 20 February. We want to link the issue of massive spending on the war to lack of spending on education and the military research carried out on many higher education campuses.

We are encouraging pickets, meetings, teach-ins and demonstrations on this day. We are making sure

posters, badges and stickers are produced. The day of action is being backed by Student CND and the next step is to get National NUS to support this action.

There is a national mailing which will be in the colleges by the time you read this article. We are producing a national newsletter with a guide to action and a detailed list of actions we are calling,

supporting and building.

Nationally, Student CND are being very active. Membership of Student CND is £3, to 168 Holloway Road, London N7.

Nationally, all student organisations opposed to the war are being encouraged to get involved with the Student Federation. Our national conference, held in Sheffield two weeks ago, was a great start to the job of building an open, democratic, activist-based movement. Over 300 delegates from nearly 80 colleges attended. You can contact the Federation c/o Steph Ward, South Yorks Area NUS Convenor, Student Union, Sheffield University.

The problem still remains that the SWP are still incredibly sectarian to the Federation. They are planning a Student Committee to Stop War in the Gulf conference on 27 February in London. We should demand that this conference is jointly organised with the Federation. We should also demand that there are elections and voting at that conference (none are planned by the SWP, who want to keep control — but they will not get away with this type of behaviour).

Already the behaviour of the SWP has meant that Student CND and the Greens are not involved with the Student Committee because it is so undemocratic.

All this will change as students get involved in the work — activists demand democratic structures and will not stand for undemocratic campaigns.

US oilworkers' leader calls for a trade union based party

'War will be paid for by the working class'

Tony Mazzochi is the secretary/treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW).

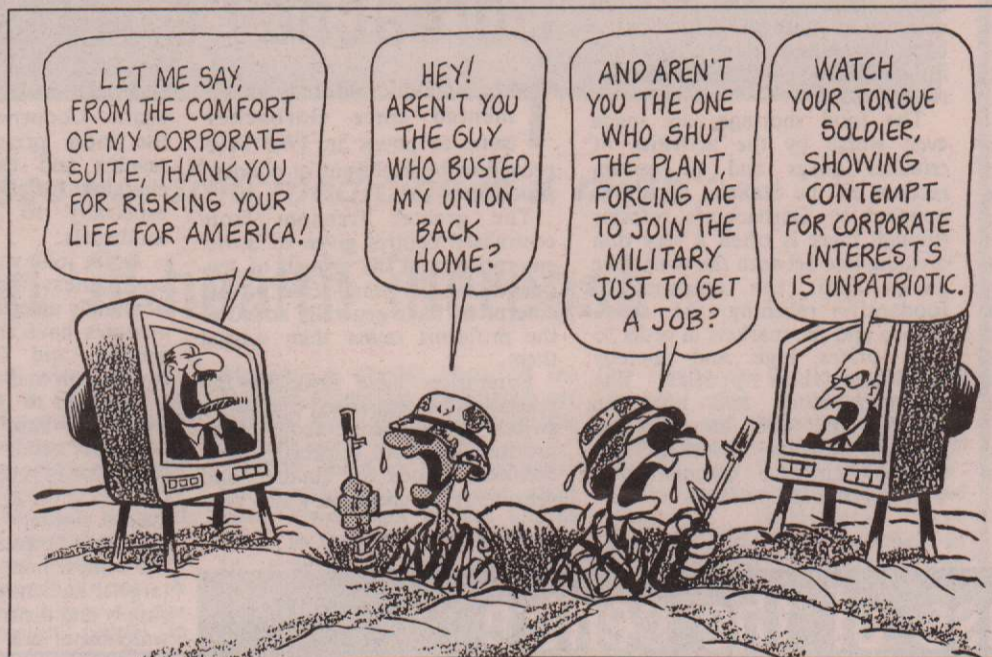
He is a prominent trade union opponent of the Gulf war and a long-time advocate of the formation of a mass trade union-based workers' party in the US.

Over the years he has built up strong rank and file support amongst oil workers by campaigning over health and safety issues.

In 1981 Mazzochi stood for the presidency of his union and lost by a mere 3,000 votes, polling far more as a percentage of the membership than supposedly 'representative' right wing trade union leaders like Eric Hammond and Bill Jordan can manage in Britain.

Tony's views on sanctions and the UN differ sharply from those of SO. Nevertheless, his is a genuine voice of rank and file dissent within the US labour movement.

He explained to SO why he was opposing the war, and how the issues of war and impending slump pointed to the need for a working class political party.



Cartoon Labor Notes

Since the war started a lot of people in the US trade unions who were campaigning against a war starting have now gone quiet.

We need to get together all the trade union people who are against this war, work out a strategy for action and sharpen up our arguments.

We've got to get people together to discuss, to think through the long-term implications of what the US is doing in the region.

I think some of the arguments used by the 'peace people' are too simple and too crude.

The oil question is misunderstood. The US is not particularly interested in cheap oil. The oil companies certainly aren't, they're worried about an international glut. No, what they are interested in is control of the region, and of the supplies.

Saddam Hussein and the oil companies have basically the same agenda.

Also, too many of the anti-war arguments are taken from the Vietnam era and re-applied to a situation that is different. The message is too crude. It's not enough to say that America has to get out. What

happens then? We should not pretend that if we can stop the shooting all the problems of the Middle East will be solved. They won't be.

There's no question that the Turks, the Syrians and the Iranians will be fighting each other to control Iraq for years to come. The area will become ever more destabilised. The Palestinian question will fester even more. We could even see an Israeli attempt to push the Palestinians out of the West Bank and Gaza and into Jordan.

There must be a role for the UN and collective security here. But, right now, it's very difficult to get these issues properly discussed.

For instance, I've just come back from the Texas oilfields. There are stars and stripes up everywhere. Nobody wants to think about the issues. We're going to have to be patient.

The war is young. There are few US casualties yet. It's the worst video show of all time. A lot of people — who initially opposed the war — are now saying that as the hostilities have started, let's just hope it's all over quickly. There is a lot of that sentiment in both the US and Canada.

We've got to counter this feeling, and put over our case.

The war will not be over quickly. There will be US troops in the region for a long, long time. We've got to point out the enormous economic costs of the war which will lead to cuts in social spending and to recession. It looks like the economy could take a really bad turn this year.

If we had a working class party we could shape the parameters of this debate. We would have a platform from which we could discuss the war rationally.

Right now, there is no forum, no platform, no political voice for working people.

We've set up a group called Labour Party Advocates. We are pressing ahead with the idea of a Labour Party because we need a coherent programme that deals with international and domestic issues.

At the moment the Democratic

"In this country 65% don't vote. A Labour Party would give voice to those, the majority, who reject the two parties of corporate America."

and Republican politicians run out on workers on every issue. We are then left with no place to go. Take the issue of this war.

Our union has put out quite a strong anti-war statement — mainly because our executive board has a rank and file majority on it.

We said the war would be paid for by the working class. The sons of workers would die. Workers would pay through cuts in state social spending programmes.

Because we don't have a mass-based workers' party the ground has just collapsed from under us and people have swung behind the war.

People are encouraged by the experience of Canada's Labour Party — the NDP — which won the elections last autumn in Ontario, Canada's biggest province.

In Labour Party Advocates we've been looking at opinion polls that show that a lot of rank and file workers would vote for a Labour Party. I think the union leadership should listen to them.

In this country 65% don't vote. A Labour Party would give a voice to those, the majority, who reject the two parties of corporate America.

• Tony Mazzochi talked to Tom Rigby

In Brief

Anglia HE students union has been prevented from campaigning against the war by a High Court injunction. The injunction was obtained by Tory student Jason Webb. The student union has an anti-war policy passed at a general meeting.

Brighton Poly: 200 students attended a teach-in, held last Sunday and hosted by the Poly's Humanities Department.

Manchester: The Manchester Area NUS (MANUS) is hosting a major public meeting with Arthur Scargill and Eddie Newman this Wednesday at Manchester University.

York sixth form's principal has written to all women students asking them to write to "the boys" in the Gulf. The student union asked to have the same facility to oppose the war. The principal refused the request because "it is political".

At Herriot Watt in Edinburgh, 7 Iraqi students have been lifted by the police. It is not certain whether they are to be detained or deported.

8 students from Bradford University, including two Palestinians, have been detained. The student union is running a protest campaign. Students will join the Bradford anti-war demonstration this Saturday 9 February (assemble 10.30, The Tyrols).

Stan Crooke examines the USSR's slide into chaos

Why Gorbachev

Rationing is now widespread in the Soviet Union, especially in the big cities.

In October 1990 the Estonian capital of Tallin introduced a ration of one kilogramme of sugar and two packs of butter per month, and 600 grammes of pasta and two kilogrammes of flour and cereals per quarter. In November rationing was introduced in Moscow. In Ukraine, workers began receiving 70% of their wages in ration vouchers, and the remaining 30% in roubles.

Rationing was introduced in Leningrad in December: one kilogramme of sausage, 500 grammes of flour, 500 grammes of butter, one kilogramme of pasta or eggs, and 1.5 kilogrammes of meat per month.

But the easiest way of obtaining commodities in short supply is barter. Newsprint is regularly exchanged for meat, cigarettes, and vouchers for tours abroad in the Russian republic. The going exchange rate is four kilogrammes of meat for one bottle of vodka. More and more enterprises are paying wages in the form of goods in kind, via plant shops or mail-order catalogues, rather than in roubles.

Rather than sell their production for cash and then attempt to purchase commodities with the money from the sale, a number of cities and even republics find it safer to use barter: Königsberg swaps fish for pipes for heating systems; Karelia swaps wood for food; Uzbekistan swaps cotton for food; and Moscow swaps various products for tomatoes.

Why are there such shortages? 15% of Soviet agricultural production rots in the fields because it is not harvested at the appropriate time. Of the rest, a further 60%

rots, gets lost, or gets stolen. Soviet tractors are constantly breaking down: 2½ times the cost of production of a tractor is spent on repairs in the course of a tractor's eight-year life. A third of the potentially available combine harvesters are out of action due to breakdowns and a lack of spare parts, or a shortage of petrol.

There are long delays in unloading foodstuffs once they arrive in the population centres, providing further opportunities for food to rot or be stolen. In December 1990 *Pravda* reported that 20,000 containers and 300 railway wagons were waiting to be unloaded in Moscow. In Irkutsk in the same month 52 trains were standing idle in the sidings: no-one knew the destination of their loads.

In Kuzbishev nearly 15,000 railway wagons with food and other consumer goods were waiting to be unloaded, whilst shiploads of pork were rotting in Odessa and shiploads of flour, meat and sugar were standing idle in Leningrad.

Even when food finally reaches the shops there is no guarantee that it will get as far as the shelves. In many shops staff hoard food in the back rooms and sell it privately at inflated prices whilst the shelves remain bare.

The food shortages are made even worse by the activities of criminal gangs and of certain sections of the Stalinist apparatus opposed to Gorbachev's reforms (though there is often a very thin dividing line between the two). The gangs limit the amount of foodstuffs reaching the shop-shelves and the markets in order to keep prices high and thereby maximise their profits. The Stalinists block and hold up supplies of food in order to promote popular discontent and thereby reinforce dissatisfaction with government policies.



The new independent unions, like the miners', are the force that can lead the USSR out of the crisis.

The failure of Gorbachev's reforms

The economic reforms implemented since Gorbachev came to power in 1985 have proved to be irrelevant or counter-productive.

The greater freedom from centralised control given to Soviet enterprises and the growth of 'co-operatives' (ie. small-scale private enterprise) have generally added to the problems rather than solving them.

Enterprises have exploited the relaxation of centralised control to switch production from low-profitability goods (especially basic consumer goods for children and pensioners) to goods on which they

expect to realise a higher rate of profit. Cooperatives have sought the most pressing gaps in the market and exploited them by charging inflated prices. This is especially so in the case of foodstuffs.

As for joint ventures with foreign companies: only 7% of the nominally agreed 13,000 or so joint ventures have actually got off the ground, and few of those are involved in manufacturing.

Attempts to improve the quality of output have resulted in fewer consumer goods reaching the shops (as more goods are rejected by quality control in the factories), cuts in workers' wages (as workers lose their bonuses dependent upon the achievement of the production target), and more blockages in the supply and distribution network (as warehouses are filled up with the rejected output).

Yet there has been no improvement in the quality of output: in 1985, 900,000 tape recorders were returned for repair during their guarantee period; by 1988 the figure had risen to 1.2 million — a fifth of the total output.

Attempts to crack down on alcoholism and improve labour



Azerbaijan: "on the brink of civil war"

discipline merely resulted in a shortage of sugar in the shops (as supplies were bought up to manufacture bootleg) and more deaths (due to the quality of the bootleg produced).

The worsening situation in the centralised state-run system of food supplies and production of consumer goods has promoted the 'Parallel Economic Circuit' (PEC).

The PEC embraces anything from legitimate small-scale private enterprise at one extreme to the activities of organised criminal gangs at the other. The dividing lines between ordinary private enterprise, speculation, profiteering, and straightforward criminal behaviour can be difficult to draw.

When police in Minsk raided the home of the director of a state shop in Minsk last year and discovered several tons of food (including two crates of smoked sausage, four crates of coffee, 18 sacks of groats, and also 25,000 packs of cigarettes), the director's excuse was: "But I was only getting ready for the transition to a market economy".

The PEC provides, at a price, the foodstuffs and consumer goods otherwise in short supply (often because of the operations of the PEC itself). Meat is sold at 25 to 30 roubles a kilogramme, eggs at up to 20 roubles for ten, and a bottle of vodka at 25 roubles. Pornographic magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* fetch 150 roubles.

Application forms for visas cost 15 roubles. On a larger scale, a one-roomed flat in Moscow can be bought for up to 25,000 roubles, and a two-room apartment for up to 70,000 roubles.

However, for transactions in the PEC the preferred currency is the American dollar. There are now an estimated two billion dollars in circulation in the Soviet Union, the equivalent of 40 billion roubles at the PEC rate of exchange.

27% of the Soviet population buy clothes and shoes in the PEC, and a further 15% buy food in the PEC. Every third rouble of profit in the PEC is 'reinvested' in bribes to officials. In the trade in foodstuffs and consumer commodities in the PEC an estimated 112 billion roubles is in circulation, nearly a quarter of the total volume of money in circulation in the Soviet Union.

When the income from drugs, prostitution, extortion and foreign currency speculation is added, the total amount is 170 billion roubles, a third of the volume of money in circulation.

Attempts by the authorities to crack down on economic crime have been unsuccessful. In the big cities in particular the criminal gangs often know of impending raids before they are carried out. The government has therefore resorted to using the KGB to combat economic crime.

In November 1990 the Supreme Soviet ordered the KGB to organise a campaign against economic sabotage and to control the distribution of imported goods. According to KGB vice-chair Victor Grushko: "In their opinion (ie. official and business circles in the West) ours is one of the few Soviet organisations which still has its integrity and is not corrupt. Chekists are experienced in protecting the most vital branches of our economy and transport, and know the real situation there."

The collapse of the centre

The growth of ethnic conflicts in the Soviet Union and the moves towards more autonomy or outright independence on the part of the different republics provide a further dimension to the social and economic crisis in the Soviet Union.

The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have spearheaded the movement for a breakaway from the Soviet Union. In the latter two republics the large Russian populations have opposed the moves towards independence, fearing that they would suffer discrimination in the event of it being achieved.

Armenia and Azerbaidzhan have hovered on the brink of civil war since the eruption of the conflict over the territory of Nagorny Karabakh in 1987. Georgia is well advanced upon the road of independence from Moscow. Within Georgia itself, the national minorities of the Abkhazians and South Ossetians are pressing for independence.

In Moldova, now re-named, Moldova, the Romanian majority population is set on a collision course with both Moscow and also the Gagauz Turkic national minority in the republic. Separatist movements are continuing to gain

ground in the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia. In Ukraine, the nationalist Rukh movement has established control over the West of the republic and is now consolidating its position in the East as well.

In the heartland of the Soviet Union the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic routinely ignores Soviet legislation passed at the all-Union level.

The accelerating movement towards the break up of the Soviet Union along national lines renders the old-style centralised economic 'planning' more futile than ever. Production targets and economic reforms announced by the centre are ignored, with many republics, especially the Russian republic, moving towards a market economy at a pace much more rapid than that proposed by the centre.

The Soviet republics are no longer prepared to continue exporting their industrial output and food produce to other Soviet republics. Kazakhstan, Byelorussia, and Armenia have banned the export of food, medicines, and building materials to the rest of the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan and Kirghizia have ended supplies of onions and citrus fruits to Moscow, and many local regions around

Moscow have ended supplying the city with food in retaliation for Moscow's decision in June of last year not to allow non-Muscovites to shop in Moscow.

Byelorussia, which exports 80% of its production of televisions and fridges to other Soviet republics, has announced that in future all increased output will be reserved for its own citizens. Ukraine has ceased exporting meat, as a retaliation for the decision of the central 'planners' to reduce deliveries of animal fodder to the republic by 40%.

Ukrainian economists now argue in favour of selling the republic's grain surplus to the West rather than to other Soviet republics. Economists in the Baltic states advocate a complete re-orientation of trade away from the Soviet Union and towards Scandinavia and Germany.

The growing nationalist unrest and the growing food shortages thus reinforce each other. Under the influence of nationalist movements different Soviet republics have cut back their exports to other Soviet republics, thus adding to the shortages of food and other consumer goods. At the same time, the growing shortages have fuelled discontent and nationalist hostility to the centre, thus adding to the support for separatism.

has failed



Empty shelves as the black markets take over

"15,000 homeless in Moscow... free medicine is a myth"

Homelessness and ill-health increase

The KGB has certainly not done anything about basic housing and health care for the people.

In Moscow alone there is a shortfall of 90 million square metres of living space and the average living space per person is 17.7 square metres (as against the recommended norm of 26 to 30 square metres). Housing is not only

overcrowded but also of low quality, due to a shortage of building materials, and lacking in many basic amenities.

Homelessness has become increasingly widespread. A survey carried out in Kharkov in 1990 found 300 people sleeping rough in door entrances and over underground heating systems. A Ministry of Interior survey put the number of homeless people in

Moscow at 15,000. Many of the homeless lived by scavenging off rubbish tips. Some lived in the rubbish tips.

Under Brezhnev life expectancy fell continuously, and was seven years lower than in the United States by the time Gorbachev came to power. Infant mortality increased.

According to the Soviet Ministry

of Health the air in at least 104 Soviet cities is dangerous to breathe, and 50% of the country's population uses water which fails to meet health standards. Unrestrained use of herbicides and chemical fertilisers have contaminated food supplies in many regions; emissions from plants and factories have wreaked havoc with the health of the local populations.

Free medical treatment has always been a myth in the Soviet Union, and is so more than ever today. Even pregnant women wanting an anaesthetic when giving birth can receive one only if they bribe the hospital staff. The Soviet Union has failed to develop its own pharmaceutical industry, and the usual shortage of medicines and medical materials has now been made worse by cuts in imports of them due to the government's shortage of hard currency.

In Leningrad, for example, the Louis Pasteur Institute is currently short of 28,000 vaccines. Even basic items such as tampons and sanitary towels are unavailable. They have never been produced in the Soviet Union and cotton wool has been used as a substitute. But now there is a shortage of cotton wool as well.

The low level of hygiene in the handling of blood and the lack of disposable syringes in Soviet hospitals have created a favourable environment for the spread of AIDS. If AIDS continues to spread in the Soviet Union at the present rate, then, according to the most pessimistic estimates, the country's entire population will have contracted AIDS by the end of the century.

Such elements are becoming increasingly vociferous. A meeting of the directors of state enterprises held in December of last year called for a ban on all strikers. KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchov has accused foreign secret services of trying to break up the Soviet Union.

An attempt at an authoritarian clampdown and a return to Brezhnevite levels of repression is now a real possibility in the Soviet Union.

In solidarity with the emerging labour movements in the republics of the Soviet Union, and in solidarity with the right of the oppressed nationalities of the Soviet Union to self-determination, the labour movement in Britain and elsewhere must campaign in opposition to the increasing level of repression in the Soviet Union and in opposition to the threat of an authoritarian clampdown.

Adapted from a pamphlet published by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc, 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5

Prospects for the future

Soviet economists reckon that between 20% and 30% of all state enterprises are bankrupt, and even in the potentially healthy ones cuts of up to 30% in the workforce are required. According to the State Committee for Statistics, after a brief improvement in the summer of 1991 the scale of the food crisis is likely to increase again in the winter of 1991/92 and the spring of 1992.

Interviewed in *Pravda* in January 1991, Anatoly Komin, the chair of the State Prices Committee, warned that the retail prices of food and other consumer goods would increase during the first half of the year. The prices of cars, radios, televisions, freezers and washing machines would increase by between 50% and 70% as well. An indication of the coming price rises was provided by a number of wholesale price increases which came into effect on 1 January: timber doubled in price, metal went up by 50% and some machinery by 40%.

Not all regions of the Soviet Union have suffered from severe

shortages. In the provinces, and even in some of the major non-Russian cities, consumers have often been able to escape acute shortages. But the system is clearly sliding into chaos.

The conservative elements of the Stalinist apparatus are increasingly discontented with the turn of events in the Soviet Union. In the higher army ranks discontent is widespread: Gorbachev is condemned for pulling out of Afghanistan, for allowing the reunification of Germany, for backing the United States in the Gulf crisis, and for the 600 dead and 600,000 refugees caused by the simmering ethnic conflicts.

Communist Party apparatchiks who fear the loss of their privileges, directors of state enterprises who fear the closure of their enterprises, and KGB functionaries who hold Gorbachev responsible for what they perceive as the country's decline into lawlessness and anarchy, share in the discontent of the higher ranks in the armed forces.

"The nomenklatura are looking to re-establish the old system."

By Anatoly Voronov, Moscow Socialist Party

We are all on full alert after the recent events in the Baltic states.

We consider this the beginning of the way back from perestroika. The nomenklatura are looking to re-establish the old system.

The Moscow City Council is more democratic than the central power. The Moscow Council is in permanent conflict with the more reactionary central government.

Our attitude towards the Moscow Council is ambiguous. We support the democratic efforts of the new Moscow authorities. But some of these people are strong supporters of the market economy. They are trying, with great effort, to privatise the shops and small businesses in Moscow. This is not good.

Links between us in Moscow and the Baltics are quite difficult. The counter-attack of the reactionaries have made links more difficult. We can not participate immediately and actively in these events: it is hard to get there now.

There was a big demonstration in Moscow one week ago to oppose the repression. We are expecting further moves to repression. Every day gets harder. They are trying to silence the media. They do not let our voice be heard on the television.

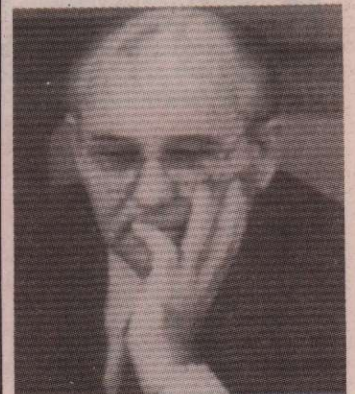
Even Gorbachev, some weeks ago, proposed openly to suspend the law on the mass media. The Ministers of the Interior and of Defence have decided to send military patrols onto the streets. This was done to suppress protests. The military try to stay out of the way — but we sometimes see them.

The general situation is bad. The party apparatus — at a medium level — is opposing the democratic councils, especially in Moscow and Leningrad. Moscow and Leningrad are very vulnerable, because they do not produce their own food or consumer goods.

In Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and other big cities the authorities are quite democratic. In the vast majority of smaller cities the authorities are still very conservative, they are very Party loyal. They simply cut the supplies of food, for example, to Moscow. They hope for the discontent of the Moscow population.

The central government has almost doubled the wholesale prices for raw materials. The official prices of these products have not risen. Because of this a lot of factories are bankrupt. They get less than they pay for raw materials.

The money changes and the freezing of people's money in the banks have already happened. Now I expect wage freezes and price rises. Workers will be asked to pay for the incompetent government.



Gorbachev: turning to the right

After truth, another casualty: civil rights

By interning and deporting many Arabs living here — including long-time opponents of Saddam Hussein — the British government is following a shameful example set by its internment of Germans and Italians in World War 2. Liz Millward tells the story

Of the millions who fled (or tried to flee) Nazi persecution in the 1930s and '40s, a few thousand were admitted to Britain.

Those refugees who did come here were admitted entirely through the efforts of voluntary bodies who promised to support them.

The majority of refugees were Jewish, and it was due to Jewish organisations in Britain that they were able to reach Britain at all. The British government insisted that refugees could only come if they would not be a "charge on public funds". This meant that refugees had to overcome mountains of bureaucracy when conditions in Europe hardly allowed for patience.

Despite the red tape there seems to have been a tremendous response from charities and voluntary bodies to provide the labour and money necessary to bring the refugees here.

Various civil servants "oversaw" the work of the voluntary organisations, but the government's policy was to prevent refugees settling in Britain. Yet, by September 1939, over 70,000 refugees were "registered" with the voluntary organisations which had promised to support them.

The largest such body was the Central Council for Jewish Refugees, which was responsible for about 80% of all the refugees. The Central Council spent several million pounds bringing the refugees from Europe and supporting them once here. All the money was donated by private citizens.

Once in Britain the refugees were subject to categorisation. They were all interviewed at least once — and here the government did step in. Refugees were divided into categories A, B and C: As were interned, Bs had various restrictions on their freedom, and Cs could go free. In addition, all refugees were divided, whatever their category, into "victims of Nazi oppression" and others.

As the Nazi terror increased in Germany and Austria, the British public became increasingly sympathetic to the plight of the refugees. Some restrictions were lifted and children in par-



An internment camp in Britain, 1940

ticular were accepted in greater numbers.

Some of the refugees (in category C) were allowed to take jobs. Several started businesses — in some cases employing hundreds. Students and academics were found places in colleges, and others helped the war effort in science, medicine, farming, industry and in "pioneer battalions". With the exception of the people waiting to re-emigrate (mainly to the USA and Palestine) the refugees began to integrate into British society.

At the beginning of 1940 all category B refugees were to be re-interviewed with a view to removing the restrictions on them. It was generally accepted that the Bs were the "don't know" category, and that most of them had been unfairly treated. But almost before the interviews had started, thousands of the refugees were interned without warning.

People were taken from their jobs and homes by police and army in May 1940. Secrecy surrounded the internments, and many of the refugees were not even allowed to contact relatives and friends before being taken to camps.

There was little rhyme or reason to the internments, and there is no evidence that the instruction to intern various classes of people was particularly detailed. Initially a "protection" zone was declared around the South and East coasts, and refugees were expelled from it.

Many such refugees were then interned a few days later because, having just moved, they were

unemployed and without anyone to vouch for them. Providing they were under 70, sick and disabled men could be interned — and often were.

The cry of "intern the lot" was raised in both media and parliament, and overnight refugees from Nazi terror were transformed into "fifth columnists", "Quislings", and traitors.

By the end of July 1940, 30,000 "enemy aliens" had been interned. But the internment itself was well organised and humane compared to what came afterwards.

Once in the custody of police or army, the internees were totally cut off from the outside world. They were stripped of possessions and money. Their papers, passports, visas — all forms of identification, were taken from them. Many of the refugees, if not a majority, never saw these things again.

No proper record of the internees' names or whereabouts was kept by anyone. When the internees arrived at camps or transit points they could not prove who they were or what their status was. Their families could not locate them.

These were people about whom the state knew everything. They had been granted visas, interviewed and classified. But in a few short weeks all the information was so muddled that no one could say with any confidence who, or where, any of the internees were.

The vast majority of the internees were genuine refugees — Jews, socialists, political activists. A minority were prisoners of war — Nazis, loyal to Hitler. Nazis and anti-Nazis were mixed up, in some cases having to share rooms and even beds.

Medical treatment for the old and sick was non-existent in the camps. Conditions were appalling: accommodation in tents, racecourse buildings, old warehouses, buckets for sanitation, no beds or mattresses, inadequate food, overcrowding, damp, no contact with the outside world, no information. Many of these people had escaped

from Nazi concentration camps. They knew that France had handed all the foreign nations over to Hitler after the surrender, after first rounding them up and interning them. In France then there were many tens of thousands of Spanish Republicans, who had lost the recently-ended Spanish Civil War.

Britain's internees had no idea what had happened to their wives and families — and no-one would tell them what was going on. The following is an account from a man interned at Huyton, Lancashire (24 July 1940):

"So much has happened until today that it would fill the pages of a tragic novel. Another suicide, a man who became mad and many who turned melancholic. We are afraid now that they might attempt suicide. Another transport with unknown destination is being arranged for. They say that all men between the ages of 20 and 50 will be deported. This caused great unrest. A meeting was called and the named men protested at being deported and leaving their wives and children behind in uncertainty. We decided rather to be shot than to be deported..."

The internees were kept in degradation and uncertainty. It is difficult to see how things could have got worse, short of systematic murder (the internees were already dying of disease caused by the conditions).

But things *did* get worse. The deportation of the internees began. On 2 July 1940 a ship called the Arandora Star, with 1,500 German and Italian internees was sunk on its way to Canada. Over half the internees drowned. This was bad enough. The attempt to cover up the disaster was even worse.

The news that the Arandora Star had been sunk carrying internees was first broken to the press. The families of the passengers did not even know that their relatives had left Britain. Until they read the newspapers the relatives and friends of the refugees did not know that deportations were even taking place.

Secondly, no-one in authority knew who, exactly, was on the ship, who had drowned and who survived. Anthony Eden, British Minister for War, claimed that all the passengers were category A internees, and further claimed that they were therefore all Nazis. But many category A internees were anti-Nazis, people who had struggled all their lives against fascism.

To add insult to injury, the government proposed to communicate a list of the missing to the Nazis in Germany "so that the next of kin could be informed". The next day, while still claiming that all the drowned men were fascists, the government admitted that it had only a "nominal" list of the passengers, but said that the list would be passed to the refugee organisations — again, so that the next of kin could be informed.

If the dead men were all Nazis, the refugee organisations would not need to be told. In fact, many of the passengers were anti-Nazis, and only the most bumbling incompetence (or malice) would have passed a list of them to the Nazis, or be so unsure of who or what they were.

The survivors were bundled on to other ships and out of the country within days of their rescue, before they had the chance to tell their story.

Again neither they nor their relatives were told. Again, Nazis and anti-Nazis were mixed up and deported together.

When the first survivor did manage to tell his story the reasons for the cover-up became clearer. The internees had been herded onto the ships at gunpoint. Some had been made to "volunteer" through bribery with money, others by being told that their wives and children would be in the same convoy, others were told that if they did not go, their places would be taken by older, sick men who would not survive the journey.

The ship was not equipped to carry the internees — once more accommodation was overcrowded and inhuman. There were only enough lifeboats for the crew and the accompanying soldiers. No

Britain has a long and notorious history of interning political opponents (most recently in Ireland). Britain invented the modern concentration camp during the Boer war 90 years ago, interning Boer women and children in murderously unhealthy conditions.



Arab workers in France line up to apply for legal residence. Police identity checks on Arabs in France, long a scandal, have increased 500% in some areas since the war started.

boat drill" was held. When the ship was hit the only people who were properly escorted to the boats were — the Nazis and their officers. The refugees heard no alarm, were given no instructions, and in some cases were held back from rafts and boats at Lyonnet-point. Most of the refugees who managed to get over the side simply clung to bits of wood. The ship was in a convoy — 1½ hours steaming time away from the nearest ship (a destroyer). But the Arandora Star sent out no Mayday call and the survivors were not rescued until six hours after the ship had sunk. Had the Arandora Star sent out an SOS, many more lives would have been saved.

Many tales of horror are told, quite rightly, of the Nazi concentration camps. Some of the internees who set sail on the Arandora Star had escaped from such camps. They thought they were coming to a free country whose government and people were pledged to fight Hitler and all he stood for.

Far, far fewer people died as a result of British internment than in the Nazi camps. But they were the same people — Jews, trade unionists, communists. They were interned alongside their Nazi torturers, and had to watch the Nazis get better treatment from the British than they did themselves. They knew the Nazis wanted to kill them. They thought the British wanted to help them.

The refugees were probably the best well "classified" people in the country. The government (until it liberally "lost" them) probably had better records of the refugees than it did about British seamen. But when it came to hunting for "traitors" the government declared the only course was "to intern the lot".

It is possible, even probable, that some of the refugees were spies. But they wouldn't have been very good spies — with poor English, little freedom of movement, no access to the military or the civil service.

Until the beginning of 1940, the government had had a relatively humane attitude to refugees. What happened?

The government argued that the pressure of public opinion and "Army opinion" had forced the internments. But until the government liberally set about changing it, public opinion was sympathetic to the refugees.

A Mass Observation survey in April 1940 proved that the public, so far as they knew about the refugees, did not call for mass in-

terment. But the same survey repeated a few months later showed that people had changed their minds. The change came after internment had begun, and after a press campaign vilifying all Germans, Austrians and Italians.

Papers like the *Daily Mail* carried leading articles, lumping the whole German people together, insulting them, and blaming them for Hitler. Stories included phrases like "the only good German is a dead German" and "you can never trust a Boche", and concluded that mass internment was the only way of removing the threat.

The shift in public opinion was engineered by the very people (like Lord Rothermere, proprietor of the *Daily Mail*) who had been most vehemently against going to war with Hitler. These were the people who supported Hitler's fight against "the Bolsheviks". The most ardent demands for internment came from the very people who had been the most ardent champions of appeasement before the war. Rothermere himself was an active supporter of the Mosleyite fascists in the mid-1930s.

"Army opinion" was simply the opinion of the most senior officers, who reported to the Cabinet. Their opinion may have been based on panic after the fall of France, but more likely they were unable to distinguish between the Nazi party and the German people.

It was also easier for all the "decision-makers" and "opinion

formers" to look for "fifth columnists" and "traitors" amongst foreign nationals than amongst themselves. The most likely traitors would be found in the ranks of the ruling class who were friendly with Hitler before the war. Many such people thought Britain was fighting "the wrong war" — we should have been fighting with Hitler against Stalin.

The truth is that there was no good reason for interning these thousands of refugees. There was no excuse for keeping them in such inhuman conditions. The policy and practice of internment in World War 2 has never been explained or apologised for by successive governments and remains shrouded in secrecy.

It was a disgraceful episode, and the longer the Gulf war continues, the more likely it is to be repeated. Categories of Arabs other than Iraqis and Palestinians may become "enemy nationals" if alliances shift in the war, as they may well shift.

The current government has little regard for civil rights in peacetime, it is likely to become more authoritarian as the war progresses. Newspapers like the *Sun* would be quite happy to scream "intern the lot!" and all Iraqi nationals, pro-Saddam and anti-Saddam, would be at risk.

Incompetence, racism and bureaucracy will do the rest.

• Statistics from Francois Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*

The British government is already rounding up Arabs living here, either for long-term internment, or deportation. "Internment" is a word like "execution", somehow managing to avoid the reality of what it means — in this case imprisonment at the whim of government, without charge or even the right to know what you are suspected of.

During a war it is no surprise that citizens of the opposing "side" come under scrutiny. Saddam Hussein has stated that terrorism is planned for British cities. The most likely terrorists are native Iraqis and those

Palestinians who have rallied to Saddam Hussein.

But suspected terrorists will not be arrested, charged and tried — even though convictions would be virtually guaranteed, given media hysteria. The government has chosen to pick up anyone it doesn't like the look of, and stick them in jail.

Internment without trial, and deportation without appeal are the marks of a totalitarian state. Internment is common in Iraq, and was and is used in countries like Russia and South Africa to keep the population in a state of fear.

Where we stand

New pamphlet dissects the lies

Gerry Bates reviews the new Workers Liberty/Socialist Organiser pamphlet, *War in the Gulf: Issues for Labour*

This pamphlet dissects and destroys the lies and propaganda used to justify the atrocious war in the Gulf.

The war is not about liberation or democracy. It is about US and Western control of oil.

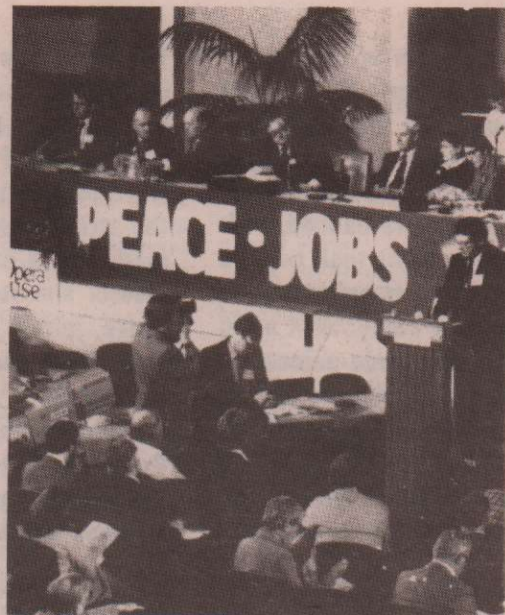
It is not a step towards a harmonious "new world order" but a step back into revived colonial or semi-colonial imperialism. The US and Britain are not fighting just about Kuwait, but about US-British political and military control of the strategic oil areas.

It will not be — is already proving not to be — a quick, "surgical" police action, taking out Saddam Hussein and then leaving the region free and peaceful. The war will be long and bloody; and it is breeding the conditions for further wars. The US's attempt to re-establish semi colonial power in the Gulf cannot fail to lead to further clashes between it and Arab nationalist movements.

The war is not an enforcement of the authority of international law; the United Nations has been dragged in as a rubber-stamp for US imperialism by the balance of power politics, and nothing lofter.

The US and Britain do not represent democracy in the region, as against the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. On the contrary — as a section of the pamphlet on the history of imperialism in Arabia shows — the US and Britain have been imperialist tyrants, or the imperialist backers of local tyrants, in the region for over 150 years. Iraq won real independence from Britain as recently as 1958.

The pamphlet also takes a cold and critical look at the actions and apologies of Saddam Hussein. It traces the logic of war and police-state terror in Iraq — "the Middle East's first totalitarian society" — and condemns Iraq's seizure of Kuwait. Saddam's appeals to Arab unity it describes as "cynical, self-serving



"Peace, Jobs" — Labour Party slogans from the early '80s. But Kinnock now backs the war. Photo: John Harris

and demagogic". Cutting through the lies and apologetics of the governments on both sides, the pamphlet carves out an independent working class viewpoint which is also distinctive on the left.

The majority view of the Western left is summed up on CND's placards: "Ceasefire, Sanctions, Negotiate".

But effective sanctions would mean an economic blockade tight enough to strangle Iraq's economy. An economic blockade that tight would mean military force to stop trade — and to strike back when Iraq tried to break the blockade. In short, it would mean war.

Economic sanctions are an attractive policy to many on the Western left because they seem to respond to the feeling that "something must be done about Saddam Hussein" while avoiding the horrors of war. But they are not a coherent alternative to war; and as "something" to be "done about Saddam Hussein" they cannot be evaluated in the abstract, without regard to who is "doing something", governed by what interests and motives.

Since August, it has been the imperialist US and its allies "doing something", in the interests of Western oil power and not of democracy or liberation.

The other common view on the left is "pro-Iraqi" where the CND view is implicitly pro-Western.

War in the Gulf is also "pro-Iraqi" in the sense that it supports the defence of Iraq against the American-led blitzkrieg. But it draws a distinction between the defence of Iraq and support for Saddam's ambitions and acts of aggressions, a

distinction not respected by many on the left.

Socialist Worker and Militant, for example, support Iraq not only in its national self-defence but also in its seizure of Kuwait and (SW) in its attacks on Israel.

Even *Socialist Outlook*, which has been much better on this issue than SW or *Militant*, declares in its latest "Gulf war special" that "the Ba'athist government [in Iraq], in however distorted a way, is an Arab nationalist force. Arab nationalism since World War 2 has meant continual conflict [with] the aims of imperialism."

This is rather like *Outlook's* view that the old Stalinist states in Eastern Europe were "in however distorted a way" workers' states.

Obviously the Iraqi government is Iraqi nationalist. But to imply that it is doing anything real, "in however distorted a way", to unify and liberate the Arab peoples, is to concede to Saddam's demagoguery.

The pamphlet also contains the text of the moving speech made by Eric Heffer when, despite grave illness, he went to Parliament to speak against war in September last year, and an article by Leon Trotsky which casts light on many of the underlying theoretical issues.

• 75p plus 17p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

**WAR
IN THE
GULF**
Issues for
Labour

A Workers Liberty/Socialist Organiser pamphlet 75p

The industrial struggle in wartime

Class war in the Barrow

Britain is now in its biggest war since World War 2; and this war, like that one, is already leading to attacks on civil liberties. In World War 2, strikes were banned, and the government took powers to jail anti-war agitators. The Communist Party, then a big force in the trade unions, supported the ban on strikes; the Trotskyists fought it. In September-October 1943 Vickers shipyard workers in Barrow struck over wages.

The bosses had delayed implementation in some categories of the national award handed down under wartime arbitration rules, but the strike won some increases in excess of the award. The story of that strike, told in this extract from "War and the International", by Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein, illustrates how Trotskyists fought for class-struggle politics in wartime.

...activity of the unions" and sought to "inflare and prolong every strike, not hesitating to split the union to gain their own ends. Not the Communists alone, but the whole British people is threatened by their defeatist activity". Mr Shvernik, leader of the Soviet Trade Union delegation then in Britain, even issued a "timely warning against enemy agents". But WIL was easily able to counter this effectively by showing how the employers had been the real ones to play ball with Hitler, when Vickers negotiated with him the sale of war materials over the bodies of the German workers in 1934 using a supporter of Mosley as go-between.

The workers' confidence grows

Three ILP supporters of the Militant Workers Federation sat on the strike committee, and it invited Roy Tearse to attend: "I was made an honorary member of the committee — that was the first thing — and I used to attend their deliberations. It was they who would make the decisions. It was not me that did anything like that. They didn't need me to even say anything, their position was one of complete confidence. I'll give you some examples of this. The Managing Director was Sir Charles Vickers (Craven) — I think that was his name — and after a while he must have realised they were in trouble, and he sent for the Shop Stewards Committee to come to meet him.

"Well, the Shop Stewards Committee replied that they were not prepared to meet him, but could he come and see them. So he came to the strike committee rooms in his chauffeur-driven car, and he comes up and walks in. And they said 'Hold up, we'll call you when we're ready. There is a meeting in progress. You can wait outside, and we'll call you when we want you'. They stretched this out — they really had him dancing, and they knew

pool, came Jimmy Deane and Arthur Farrager to counter on behalf of WIL. He tried desperately to restrict the influence of their paper sales by putting out a sheet headed *A Real Socialist Appeal*, but his agitation became so hysterical that he only made himself ridiculous. Asking Deane and Farrager what he thought was a telling question as to why they weren't in the army they countered with the same, only to receive the reply, "I'm doing my utmost — I'm a blood donor", to cheers of delighted laughter from the crowd. They sold *Socialist Appeal* in hundreds during the dispute, and reaped a rich harvest of donations.

"The line of the Communist Party was, of course, that the Trotskyists were a 'pro-fascist gangster outfit' who abhorred 'the disciplined activity of the unions'..."

The line of the Communist Party was, of course, that the Trotskyists were a "pro-fascist gangster outfit" who abhorred "the disciplined ac-

On August 1st, Ted Rea, a delegate from Barrow, reported to the National Committee of the Militant Workers Federation in Nottingham that the dispute was about to come to a head, and the committee promised all possible support.

Three weeks later the Barrow District Committee of the AEU gave 21 days notice of strike, but after nine days the Executive Council of the AEU — crammed with Stalinists — withdrew the note and told the Barrow District Council to hold a mass meeting informing them of it.

The District Committee refused, and allowed the shop stewards to call a mass meeting on September 16th which voted to come out there and then. Soon the whole town was out.

Sensing trouble, the Communist Party sent its Lancashire Industrial Organiser, Pat Devine, who began to hold meetings outside the entrances of Vickers' Yards speaking against the strike agitation and calling for full production to help the allies to mount a second front and aid Russia. After him, from Liver-



they had him dancing — this was how strongly they felt about it. And then he came in and said his piece and made his proposals, and sat down waiting for their answer. And they said 'We'll let you know. We'll have to discuss this, and give you our answer — maybe tomorrow'. He wanted to know on the spot what the position was! What this story shows — it really tells of the tremendous confidence that these workers had in themselves.

"There did come one stage — at one point, actually — Trewartha, who was the chairman of the strike committee, a very capable and honest worker — said that they had to make a decision one way or

another, whether to hang on or to go back. And he did ask my advice about this, and someone suggested 'put it to the workers'. And Trewartha, quite correctly, said that would have to be done, but they, as a responsible leadership, had to make the recommendations. It was this sort of leadership that was responsible for the victory of the strike. There is no question about this. It was a resounding victory."

Ted Rea from the Militant Workers Federation was in charge of collecting money for hardship payments and, of course, this led to allegations that the strike was funded by Trotskyists. How long these rumours were to float around can

Building a working class movement — or empty posturing? An open letter to an honest sectarian

AGAINST THE TIDE
By Jim Denham



Dear Jeff

We had yet another very heated argument on the coach down to last week's Gulf demo. Quite possibly our row generated more heat than light and I accept my share of the blame for that.

But the matter at the heart of our disagreement is of crucial importance — how to build a principled, effective anti-war movement capable of mobilising the working class.

I think it's worth pursuing my side of the argument in this form because you are a serious, honest socialist (I wouldn't necessarily say the same about the organisation to which you belong) and your views are fairly typical of quite a few would-be 'revolutionary' organisations and individuals.

Your case, as I understand it, can be roughly summarised as follows: the basis of any principled anti-war movement has to be an understanding that the war is an act of 'naked imperialist aggression'. It therefore

follows that slogans such as 'Stop the War' or even 'Troops Out Now' are inadequate. A principled campaign has to be based upon clear slogans along the lines of 'Victory to Iraq', 'No to Sanctions, Break the Blockade! Send Unconditional Aid to Iraq'. In other words, we need an explicitly 'anti-imperialist' campaign.

I think we can agree that the US/British side in the war are behaving in fairly classic 'imperialist' fashion and that Iraq, even under Saddam Hussein, has a right to defend itself from invasion and subjugation. I know that we agree about the role of the UN in all this and that sanctions were never seriously intended as an *alternative* to war but as a *preparation* for it.

Our disagreement comes on the matter of whether an acceptance of this analysis must be the *basis of the campaign* — indeed, a *precondition* for joining it.

Whether we like it or not, most socialist-minded workers who might naturally be inclined to oppose the war, do *not* accept our analysis. Many have illusions in the UN and sanctions; many more believe 'something has to be done about Saddam Hussein'.

I'm not talking about caricature *Sun* readers here; I mean the mass of honest, serious workers who *think* about the issues and are not particularly impressed by fancy sloganising and rhetoric about 'imperialism'. These are the people we must win over if a *real* anti-war movement, capable of *doing*

something to stop the war, is to be built.

Such people are not only not impressed by sloganising and rhetoric: they are positively repelled by it. They have genuine doubts and worries that need to be discussed, debated and — yes — even *argued* through. But just lecturing them about the evils of imperialism doesn't help here. And certainly, giving the impression that we give willy-nilly, blanket support to Saddam Hussein is guaranteed to drive them away.

Unfortunately, you and your comrades do exactly what I've just described. You may satisfy your personal need to be ever-so 'anti-imperialist' and 'r-r-revolutionary' but to most workers you just make us all look like a bunch of bloody-thirsty wild, nutty people.

And, actually, such 'anti-imperialist' posturing is not even genuine ultra-leftism (in the way, for instance, that syndicalist super-militancy is in industrial disputes); it's really a *right wing* deviation, giving support to petit-bourgeois nationalism, and displaying an astounding indifference to such things as the fascistic treatment of the Kuwaitis — not to speak of the Iraqis! — by Saddam Hussein.

None of the above is intended to give comfort to the middle-class pacifists who want to limit the anti-war movement to abstract pleas for 'peace' and outlaw serious, political debate within the movement; it is intended to wake people like you up to the need to conduct yourselves *responsibly* and

to have some regard for the mass of working class people who are unhappy about the war but need to be *won* and *convinced* by our argument.

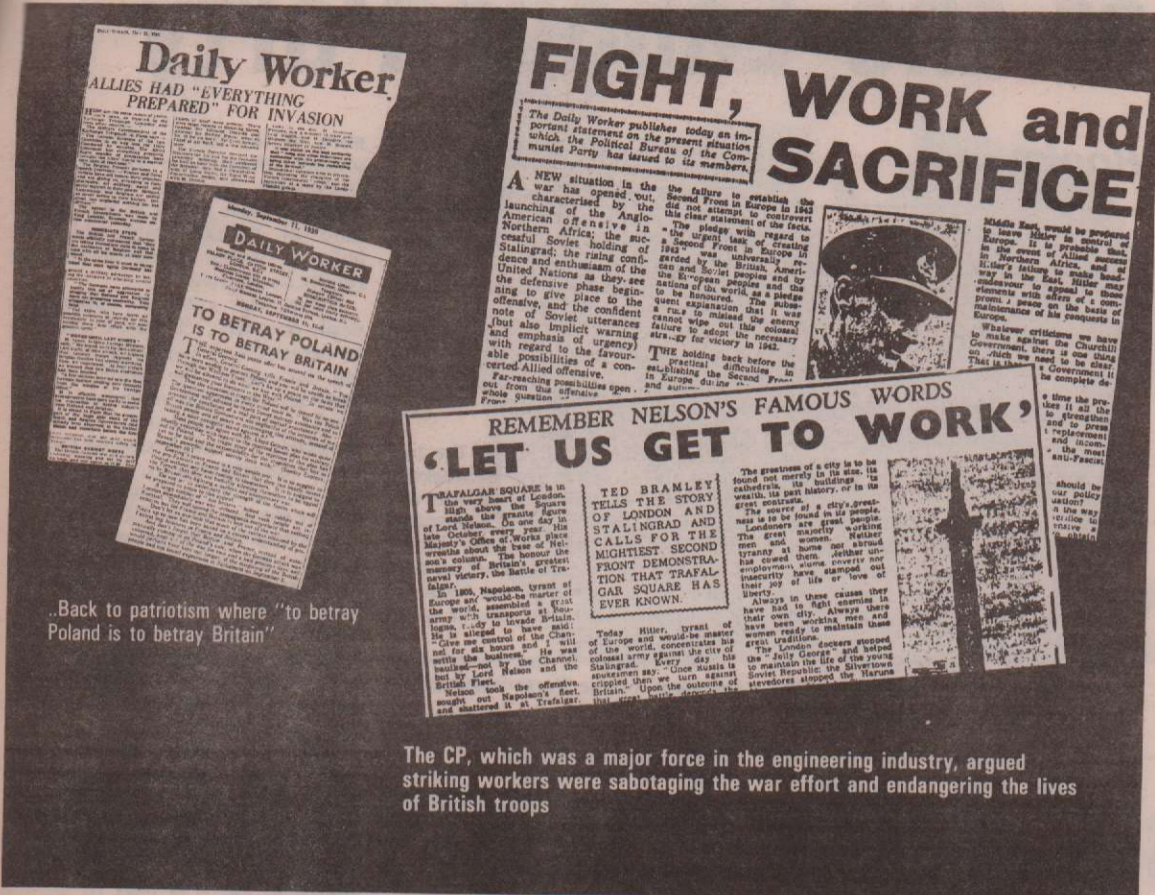
Not all their instincts — their dislike of Saddam Hussein and their concern for the lives of "our boys/girls", for instance — are misplaced. The conclusions they may draw from such instincts are often wrong, but we need to *relate* to such sentiments, not simply denounce them or (almost as bad) reply with empty sloganising.

I can almost hear you growling with rage at such 'rightist' arguments, Jeff. As I've explained, it's not really me who is 'rightist' here — it's you. Read Lenin on 'Left Wing Communism' (yes, I know it's a much misused book, but it *is* relevant here) or Trotsky on 'A Sectarian Caricature' or almost anything by James P Cannon. Or were they all right wing and soft on these matters?

Finally, you will note that I have deliberately avoided any mention of the issue that sparked our row: whether there can be any socialist justification for Saddam's missile attacks on Israel and whether the 'Zionist state' has any right to defend itself under any circumstances. Frankly, I find your position on this revolting and — yes — objectively *anti-semitic*. Or perhaps we'd better stick to open letters.

Yours, Jim Denham.

shipyards, 1943



The CP, which was a major force in the engineering industry, argued striking workers were sabotaging the war effort and endangering the lives of British troops

anything like it."

The strike was a resounding victory for the Barrow men, in spite of all. Their ability to win through in the face of such odds lay in the age-old capacity of the working class to utilise the official machinery of its institutions and to elaborate alongside it unofficial bodies that were more responsive to its needs, and to combine the two with a high degree of cohesion and class consciousness. As WIL Conference documents analysed it:

"The Barrow strike was remarkable for the magnificent coordination of legal and 'illegal' activity; coordination between the local, legal machinery of the unions, as evidenced in the AEU branches and District Committee, and the 'illegal' machinery: the Council of Action, the Shop Stewards' Committee and the Strike Committee. Backed by the high morale of the Barrow workers, it was the coordination of the legal and 'illegal' activity which gave the 'victory punch' to the Barrow workers' struggle"

Further up the union the 'legal' machinery had not been quite so supportive. So strong was the CP influence that the union's Executive Council had sacked the Barrow District Committee's paid Secretary (64 years old!), suspended the District Committee itself, and refused to reinstate it after the strike had ended.

But it became speedily clear that the Executive had seriously mishandled the whole affair and piled up great hatred for itself. Even the *Daily Express* commented that "the curious feature of this strike is that most of the men out at Barrow feel more anger towards the leadership of their union for their handling of grievances during the past six months than they do towards their employers".

The union bureaucracy had totally misjudged the situation and lost immense prestige, and when the Barrow shop stewards circulated the news to other areas they felt obliged to call a special conference which met in London's Holborn Hall on the 4th and 5th November. Only two delegates had been allowed from the Barrow shop stewards, elected from a meeting specially convened by Crane, whilst the suspended district committee

demonstrated with placards outside the Hall, and leafleted other delegates as they went in, appealing to them to fight to make the Executive the servants of the membership instead of those of the Communist Party.

The platform took a severe hammering from the floor over its handling of the dispute. An attempt by one of the CP to fasten the blame on *Socialist Appeal* only encouraged a third of the 500 delegates to buy their own copies at the door of the hall. But the Conference had no power to take formal decisions, and eight months later three of the District Committee were still petitioning the Union's appeals court for reinstatement, including one who had even been prevented from standing as a delegate to Labour Party Conference.

MILITANT WORKERS' FEDERATION: the rank and file movement of industrial militants in which the Trotskyists played a leading role (see box). No relation to today's *Militant* newspaper.

WIL (Workers' International League): the main Trotskyist group of the time. **SOCIALIST APPEAL:** the newspaper published by the WIL.

MOSLEY: the main leader of British fascism in the 1930s. He was interned during World War 2.

ILP (Independent Labour Party): a group which was founded as the forerunner of the Labour Party in 1893, became the dominant influence in the Party in the '20s, and then broke away in 1931. It supported workers' struggles in World War 2, though on a pacifist rather than revolutionary basis. A shrivelled remnant of the ILP still exists today, back inside the Labour Party.

BEVIN: Minister of Labour during World War 2 — a Labour right-winger who had been a dockers' leader and first General Secretary of the TGWU.

18b: Wartime regulation giving the Home Secretary power to jail without trial anyone who he thought endangered 'the safety of the realm'.

NORTHDOWN STREET: the offices of the WIL, near Kings Cross in London.

IWW: Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary trade union movement which flourished before World War 1 in the USA. **"WAR AND THE INTERNATIONAL:** A history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain 1937-1949", by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson (published by Socialist Platform), is out of print. A reprint is due, and Socialist Platform advise us that it would already be out if Pluto Press had kept to its agreement with them.

be judged by the assertion during the Newcastle Trial seven months later that "Tearse boasted that the Militant Workers Federation had given five hundred pounds to the Barrow strike".

Such a dangerous strike in the shipbuilding industry in wartime was, of course, a direct challenge to the Government. "We cannot tolerate it," said Ernest Bevin to the House of Commons on September 24th, "and I think I'm right in issuing a warning to those people who vary in their support of the war effort. It is not limited to one side only. I have a number of 'ites, including Trotskyites, and in their circulars and literature they write against the War". He warned the strikers of the government action, and pointed out that the strike was illegal. He stated officially that "the workers who are on strike are deliberately flouting their own agreement and the arbitration procedure to which, through their unions, they are parties. They are impeding the war effort and endangering the lives of British fighting men. The only honourable and proper course for the Barrow workpeople is to accept the decision of the tribunal and end the matter".

Fleet Street and the Communist Party witch-hunt the Trotskyists

By now reports were flooding the papers that the Ministry of Labour experts were busy devising legislation to punish Trotskyists and other anti-war agitators by penalties for anyone starting a strike or helping it to continue who had not worked in the appropriate mine or factory for a specified length of time, or that the government was on the point of using the Defence Regulations or 18b against them to the same purpose.

A more immediate threat came from the Minister of Supply. Sir Andrew Duncan had a paper controller under his authority whose task it was to allocate supplies of newsprint on the basis of pre-war circulation of journals and newspapers. More than once *Socialist Appeal* had been reduced to using cut-offs from Fleet Street papers, paper used in the

fishmarket and even, on one occasion, greaseproof paper. Haston had managed to give wildly exaggerated statistics of pre-war circulation to the paper controller and had secured a more than generous allocation (so ample, indeed, that they had been partly able to finance their paper by selling the surplus on the black market).

But now, when the Battle of the Atlantic was going well for the Allies, increased supplies of newsprint from Canada led to an increase of quota to other newspapers. But in the WIL's case the controller suspended their licence on a technical plea, and threatened to revoke it altogether. In the end, perhaps as a result of an appeal to its readers, the size of *Socialist Appeal* was unaffected.

Fleet Street, on the other hand, was free to mount a witch-hunt. The *Daily Mail* reporter hung around the door of William Morris Hall to glean information from the WIL's second annual conference, from where he retailed the wildest rumours that the Barrow strike committee was inside, being entertained by the Trotskyists.

Snooping around Northdown Street, a reporter discovered that the Trotskyists were living and working "in poverty, a physical condition which is reflected in their mental outlook", whilst having the "fox-like cunning" to conceal themselves in a builders' yard in Kings Cross.

The Communists joined in the general clamour. When a shop stewards' committee under their influence at Watts & Co in Camberwell asserted that WIL members were "Fascists", Jim Hinchcliffe wrote a letter to the *South London Press* summarising the main facts of the alliance of Hitler and Stalin before June 1941 and challenging the CP to a debate. H Kanner's reply on behalf of the shop stewards' committee was to take up the rumour of the national press: "the great Labour Movement would do well thoroughly to isolate them and work to operate 18b to put them where they rightfully belong — inside, next to Mosley and Hess".

Strikers stand firm

None of the press barrage, or the immense pressure of the Communist Party from inside

the union, had the slightest effect upon the Barrow strikers:

"The Stalinists had hardly any effect in Barrow. There's no question about this. I've rarely seen a strike so solid. In fact it was so solid they didn't have pickets. They didn't need pickets. There were two blacklegs — there were only two blacklegs during the strike — and the police had raised with the strike committee the question of protecting the rights of people who wanted to work, and so on, so the strike committee agreed to provide an escort for these people who wanted to work.

"They picked the two smallest fellows they could find to make it look ludicrous, and they had to walk through the streets with the women shouting from the windows at them. It was so humiliating for them they only ever went to work for about two days. The strike was absolutely solid. I've never seen

Organising the militant minority

In May 1943 Roy Tearse [the Workers' International League industrial organiser] was involved in the industrial and political ferment going on around the Clyde.

A strike had broken out in defence of some victimised workers, as a result of which another ninety had been given the option of a £10 fine or 30 days in prison apiece.

A defence committee coming together had decided on 9th May 1943 to adopt the name of the 'Clyde Workers Committee'. The original committee of that name had formed a part of the glorious history of the Scottish Workers' Movement, when it led the famous 'revolt on the Clyde' during the First World War. It was now revived as an organisation on a shop-floor basis, with plans to develop discussion centres and issue publications and a short programme demanding the annulment of all anti-working class legislation and workers' control of transfers and, indeed, of industry itself.

The Committee went on to call a

two-day conference in Glasgow on 5th and 6th June of Clyde workers and like minded delegates from Yorkshire's West Riding, Newcastle, Nottingham, Huddersfield, Barrow and London. A formal organisational structure was agreed on, with Roy Tearse as Secretary and its central offices in Nottingham near the ROF factory. The new movement took the name of the 'Militant Workers Federation', and called another national conference to meet in Nottingham on September 12th, 1943.

The MWF had a rather loose structure, subdivided on an industry basis, to "make a determined effort at a close link-up between all districts in the industry", inspired, not so much as a conscious form of organisation favoured by revolutionaries since the days of the IWW but by the practical realities of the situation. As Roy Tearse recalls:

"Really, it was the broad militants who took a similar stand to the one we were taking — there were no restrictions on this — you could get the Shop Stewards Committee represented, trade union branches were represented, one or

two AEU District Committees were represented. Of course, this representation came from various unions...You could get individual shop stewards who would come along representing their shops. It was really a heterogeneous collection of people. And, of course, some of the support was from Glasgow...the Clyde Workers' Committee was formed...and in a sense they were the local organisation of the Militant Workers' Federation. In Barrow the District Committee of the AEU really formed the local organisation of the Militant Workers' Federation.

"It was a loose organisation (there was no such thing as formal membership), it really was, and in some senses it never really got off the ground, but in another sense had considerable contact throughout the country. And when I say 'Barrow — the District Committee of the AEU', it is simply that Barrow was a one-industry town, so the Shop Stewards Committee at Vickers were virtually the same as the District Committee of the AEU. It was present in Rugby, Nottingham and elsewhere, but Nottingham was the centre."

THE CULTURAL FRONT

A glimpse of the backroom deals

A Kinnock's-eye view of the Labour Party

Books

Stan Crooke reviews *Labour Rebuilt* by Colin Hughes and Patrick Wintour

This book is a sweetly-sick glorification of Neil Kinnock and his "new model party".

The bad guys in the book are, of course, anyone to the left of Genghis Khan. Benn supporters are portrayed as "intellectually stagnant and politically regressive" and the Benn-Heffer leadership challenge of 1988 is described as "two ageing stars completing the last date of an ill-advised comeback tour".

The left spends its time "chanting well-worn rubrics". It is guilty of having imprisoned the Labour Party in an "intellectual permafrost". Calls to defy the poll tax are "sterile and ritualistic". Arguments over the defence of basic trade union rights are "an unnecessary and time-consuming dispute". Attempts to defend unilateralism are equated with "a shameful insularity" and "an obsessive and superficial debate".

Right-wingers are portrayed in very different terms by the book's authors. Did you know, for example, that "the small featured handsomeness and released antipodean charm of Bryan Gould appeals perfectly to middle Britain"? Do the words "young, confident, ebullient and brimming with energy" spring to your mind when asked to describe Neil Kinnock?

"No other leading Labour Party figure," we are told, "could have been so systematically successful in persuading the party to change". Kinnock, the Great Helmsman,

"expended every last ounce of will to heave the party to its feet".

But the book does offer an insight into the thoroughly manipulative way in which Labour's new model politics have been foisted onto the membership.

The reader of the book has a glimpse of the Party leadership's backroom deals with union bureaucrats in order to reach agreement on the preservation of Tory anti-union legislation.

The curtain is lifted on the tortuous and secretive process whereby the policy of unilateralism was ditched, and on how party statements such as "Putting People First" were sent to the printers before they had been discussed by the National Executive Committee, never mind the membership.

The message of the book is that the views of the Party membership

noct at the outset when he personally selected the members and convenors of the groups...He designed each group to ensure the kind of political mix which he believed would bring about the results he wanted."

Given the authors' obsequious desire to glorify "Kinnock's version of perestroika" (with the left playing the role of the Baltic states?), there are countless omissions in the book: the expulsion of Party members, the suspension of Labour Party Constituencies, the suspension of Labour councillors, the effective closure of the LPYS, the imposition of candidates on CLPs, the falling Party membership, the growing financial crisis of the Party, etc, etc.

None of this, of course, fits in with the description of Kinnock and his cronies as "preparing the Labour Party for survival into the twenty-first century."

The struggles of ordinary working-class people — the NHS dispute of 1988, for example, or mass non-payment of the poll tax — are equally absent from the pages of this book. If they are mentioned at all, it is only to dismiss them as a liability and obstacle to the Kinnockite project: "The 1984 miners' strike rubbed out the first year of Kinnock's leadership".

This epitomises the outlook of the book's authors and their less than credible hero. Workers' struggles are a diversion and a liability, just as the Party membership either merely so much voting fodder for manipulation or an irksome nuisance deserving only to be ignored.

But the central question provoked by the book is this: why is *Tribune* offering it as a free gift with a year's subscription to the paper? Is this a sign of the ultimate degeneration of *Tribune*? Or is it the only way the book's authors can divest themselves of their stocks of this unwelcome object?

"The struggle of ordinary working class people — the NHS dispute of 1988 for example, for the mass non-payment of the poll tax — are equally absent from this book."

counted for nothing — neither in the eyes of the Party leadership nor in those of the book's authors. The latter define Kinnock's task as to "shove, cajole and arm-twist the Party". As far as responses from Party members to proposed policy changes were concerned, "none of it made much difference to the review groups' thinking".

This was hardly surprising. As Hughes and Wintour write: "The most important decisions influencing the outcome and management of the review were taken by Kin-



For Kinnock workers' struggles are a diversion and a liability

Phil Edwards (vice-chair, Socialist Society) continues the debate on PR

PR would not shackle Labour to the Liberals

Discussion

Al Richardson's polemic against Tariq Ali (*SO* 11 January) was justified, penetrating, well-written — and ruined by his final sideswipe at the Socialist Society, whom he accused of providing a home for disillusioned ex-Trotskyists (could we have some names?) and of aiming to "shackle Labour to the Liberals by means of proportional representation".

The Society's had worse insults — for example, the writer in Winter 1990's *Socialist Action* who described us as a trojan horse for European capital within the labour movement — but not many.

For what it's worth, we think that Labour would actually do better under PR; we certainly don't share Richardson's assumption

that the only possible result of an election held under PR would be a repeat of the 1987 voting figures, and hence a Kinnock/Ashdown coalition. However, even if this were the case, our support for PR would not merit labelling us as a trojan horse for the Paddy Ashdown fan club.

For one thing, there is a principle involved. At present millions of people who vote for "minor" parties are effectively disenfranchised. Vladimir Derer has suggested (*SO*, 30 November) that the current system, by encouraging voters to choose one of the two major parties, encourages class polarisation.

Even if the current system did deliver this neat electoral division into two class protagonists — in southern England? in Scotland? — this argument would evince a dangerously instrumental view of democracy. "One person, one vote" is a principle with which few socialists would quarrel; "one person, one vote, one value" seems to be harder to swallow for

some reason.

In any case, there are more practical reasons for doubting Richardson's prognosis that PR would equal a permanent Lib-Lab pact. Both the Liberal Democratic Party and the Liberal vote are creatures of the current electoral system. The tactical vote, which is unique to non-proportional electoral systems, has had a bigger part in the post-war Liberal vote than in that of any other party.

Given a system which didn't reward voting for the "least-worst" candidate, much of the first-preference Liberal vote would evaporate overnight. (Interestingly enough, the Liberals' preferred form of PR — the Single Transferable Vote — tends to favour second preferences).

If the Liberal vote would suffer from PR, so too would the party. Systems which penalise small parties turn any party split into a guaranteed catastrophe, making for a strong pressure for party unity regardless of

political differences. This, as *SO* readers will not need reminding, fosters intolerance and suppression of debate in the name of "electability".

The present-day Liberal Democratic Party, unlike the Labour Party, is a wildly heterogeneous lash-up held together only by the knowledge that the party's hawks and doves, corporatists and decentralisers would fare even worse apart than together. Under PR this would cease to be the case; in place of Ashdown's Liberal Democrats — let alone Steel and Owen's Alliance — we would see a loose constellation of "Liberal" splinters, some of them, though not socialist, to the left of the Labour right on many issues. For Labour to be forced, by its inability to win a majority of the popular vote, to cooperate with forces such as those would certainly not be ideal; but it would hardly be the death-knell of socialism.

This, though, is a worst-case analysis. Labour's past

failure to win 51% of the popular vote should be seen in the context of a structurally disempowering electoral system: if not every vote counts, what's the point of voting for change? Under PR electoral participation could be expected to rise, with disproportionate benefit to parties of the Left.

Moreover, under PR the Green Party would be represented in parliament, and socialists who wished to found an electoral Socialist Party would be able to do so without the disastrous consequences the current system would impose. I can see no reason why Labour under PR should not be able to govern as the dominant partner in a coalition of the Left — no reason, that is, other than the conviction, which Vladimir Derer appears to share with Roy Hattersley, that nothing could stand in the way of a Labour monopoly of power.

This, though, is the final absurdity of the anti-PR argument. The fact is that under the current electoral

system Labour has frequently shared power, generally with parties of the Right. Before the Lib-Lab pact there was the minority Labour government of 1974, kept in power by the votes of Ulster Unionists; in the 'thirties Ramsay MacDonald was the Labour Prime Minister of a Tory government.

Looking back over Labour's fortunes under the current system — the paralysis induced by Wilson's dependence on a majority of three from 1964 to 1966; Labour's highest ever vote in 1951, resulting in a Tory victory; three elections won by a Tory as extreme as Thatcher on the basis of a bare forty per cent plurality of the vote — I am amazed that it should be those who want to change it who are on the defensive.

The present system is bad for democracy; bad for working people; and bad for the Labour Party. It must be reformed, and socialists should be in the forefront of those campaigning for reform.



John Cusack as Roy and Angelica Huston as Lily in *Grifters*

Life goes on in the ad breaks

Television

By Jean Lane

How can you do a TV column without mentioning coverage of the Gulf war? You can't.

Although, if you look at the programmes in the papers, so far as Britain is concerned, life goes on as normal: sport, cartoons, films, documentaries, etc, interspersed with ads (more imaginative than many of the programmes) offering us eternal diet-conscious, spot-free life which can be transported in the most super-tech, exclusively designed cars imaginable, as if global warfare is an everyday occurrence.

Lives, spot-free or otherwise, are meanwhile being taken in their thousands in Iraq. But neither we nor the American viewers are allowed to know about it.

We are also considered, it seems, extremely stupid. While being treated to nightly views of high-tech, *Vorsprung durch Technik* bombing raids on buildings (military only, of course) so accurate the missiles can find their way up an enemy's arse at 50,000 feet, we are also, eventually, informed that seven US Marines have been killed by a missile with a name to conjure with — "friendly".

Friendly missiles, it appears, are somewhat less accurate than the rest, and the super-duper, up-to-the-minute satellite news coverage of them suddenly loses speed.

This brings memories of arguments with people in more peaceful times as to whether cuts carried out by Labour councils are kinder than those executed by the Tories. We have no more reason to believe this than we do that Britain's involvement in this war will be any more progressive under Kinnock than it is under Major.

It is not only Iraqi deaths we are to be shielded from. When a US military spokesperson was questioned about allied forces' deaths, his reply was: "Let's not get into body-bags". No-one watching the news coverage has any intention of getting into a body-bag, least of all the politicians or military big-wigs who are conducting this war from a safe distance.

The people who will be getting into them, however, will not get any of the so-called glory that war is supposed to bring about. According to the media commentator who asked the questions, hearing about numbers of body-bags is a waste of time because the Vietnam experience showed the danger of inaccurate numbers given and the level of opposition this engenders. You're not kidding it engenders opposition. Not because of inaccuracy, but because body-bags show that this war is not about computer war games, but about human life.

Iraqi as well as British and the US working class men and women are supposed to give their lives for the good of oil company profits.

Ah yes, but these brave forces are defending life as we know it. They are fighting for the right of their descendants to live wrinkle-free, bisto-flavoured, domestos-perfumed lives so truthfully depicted on TV. Thank god for that.

A world of dog eat dog

Cinema

Mark Osborn reviews

Grifters

Grifters, a tale of small-time con merchants, is directed by Stephen Frears and produced by Martin Scorsese. The film is reminiscent of previous films by these two: Scorsese's

Goodfellas and Frears' *Dangerous Liaisons*.

Grifters, like *Goodfellas*, is seedy and bloody, and resembles an old thriller movie. Not surprisingly, since it's taken from a 1950s pulp thriller. *Grifters* also contains some of the sexual friction that Frears did so well in the nicely unpleasant *Dangerous Liaisons*.

Two things go on in *Grifters*: sexual conflict between the main characters and quite a bit of general grifting (slang for conning) and

gangsterism.

Roy is the conman. Lily, Roy's mother, works for the mob. Myra, Roy's girlfriend, has a history of rather more impressive cons ('long cons') than Roy. She has now fallen on hard times. Lily dislikes Myra for sleeping with Roy. Lily and Roy are attracted to each other. Yes, it's a triangular story!

While the personal relations work themselves out amid stealing and skulduggery, the mob closes in on Lily. Lily has been ripping them off

and if they catch her they will kill her. The film *slowly* (rather too slowly at first) builds up to a crescendo, relying on atmosphere, flashbacks and one-liners to hold the audience's interest. This is quite cleverly done.

This is not a world of socialist co-operation — it's dog eat dog, and the weak and vulnerable lose out. Just like one of the more unpleasant sides of the real world, the story ends without the guilty suffering. Well, that's life.

The strange case of Inspector Morse

Television

BJ Siddon investigates the strange case of Inspector Morse and the TV detectives

Long before the current (repeated) TV series of *Inspector Morse*, I read some of Colin Dexter's books. I didn't read many because they aren't very nice. The literary Inspector Morse isn't very nice,

either. Set amongst the dreaming spires Colin Dexter invariably finds squalor and soullessness.

The telly Morse is attractive to women, lonely and introspective. In the books his main interest in women is sex (and because of his age, their availability). It is possible to imagine falling for John Thaw but never for Dexter's Inspector Morse. The telly character is based on the books, but the telly does not plumb the sordid depths of the books. Which is a good job really (for the producers) because it would be lousy entertainment.

Agatha Christie's *Poirot* is brilliant entertainment. It does not have either the intellectual pretensions or the 'realism' of *Inspector Morse*. Consequently it raises far more interesting questions. Was ever a person so perfectly cast for a role as David Suchet is for Poirot? If Hastings is living in the same flat as Poirot (as it appears) what, exactly, is their relationship, especially given Poirot's mincing walk? And why does Miss Lemon always get the out-of-period dialogue?

As if Poirot and Morse were not enough, the telly is also offering *Devices and Desires* (from PD James), *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries* and there are books of *Bergerac* and *Van Der Valk*.

Spenser for Hire (Robert B Parker) and *Perry Mason* (Erle Stanley Gardner) were both on last year. Perry Mason is repeatedly described in the books as tall and lean. In the TV series he is played by a fat man. Spenser is supposed in the books to be intelligent, resourceful and macho. On telly he is a dumb wimp.

Devices and Desires the TV series is such a travesty of the original that I have only been able to watch it in 30-second bursts (the time it takes to leave the room). The *Bergerac* books are unreadable.

I can see that there is a case for the telly making literary works more accessible by adapting them for a different medium. But detective stories are amongst the most accessible printed words in the



Inspector Morse

world. Sometimes, the telly takes what is written, focuses on a part of it, and builds something new and delightful. This has happened with Poirot.

But the most common reason for the proliferation of TV detectives is the battle for ratings (and money) and the most common result is a levelling down of the books into a glossy sameness. *Inspector Morse* the book is much less attractive than *Inspector Morse* the TV series, but much more human.

The book of the TV series is nearly always unmitigated crap. Why should the reverse be different? Do yourself a favour. Read the book instead.

"Death to cats"

By Peter Porter

There will be no more cats. Cats spread infection, cats pollute the air, cats consume seven times their own weight in food a week, cats were worshipped in decadent societies (Egypt and Ancient Rome), the Greeks had no use for cats. Cats sit down to pee (our scientists have proved it). The copulation of cats is harrowing; they are unbearably fond of the moon. Perhaps they are all right in their own country but their

traditions are alien to ours. Cats smell, they can't help it, you notice it going upstairs. Cats watch too much television, they can sleep through storms, they stabbed us in the back last time. There have never been any great artists who were cats. They don't deserve a capital C except at the beginning of a sentence. I blame my headache and my plants dying on to cats. Our district is full of them, property values are falling. When I dream of God I see a Massacre of Cats. Why should they insist on their own language and religion, who needs to purr to make his point? Death to all cats! The Rule of Dogs shall last a thousand years!

George Bush is an ecological terrorist!

WRITEBACK

Socialist Organiser has, on the whole, been doing sterling work to expose the lies of the Western propaganda machine.

However, I find that Les Hearn's article, 'The Gulf war: the environmental threat' (SO 473) tends to echo

the media assault on Saddam as "ecoterrorist". Of course, the Iraqi military are not about to win any prizes for being environmentally friendly, but the article, like the media generally, communicates as much by which it omits as by what it includes.

Take one example: when the oil spill story broke the main BBC news bulletin gave the plight of rare birds, dolphins and so on ten minutes of prime time. They omitted to say that this oil

slick which was lapping the shores of Northern Saudi Arabia was not caused by the Iraqis deliberately pumping oil into the sea but by the bombing of an Iraqi oil tanker by the US.

Moreover, the use of the story within the bulletin was disgraceful: it can only be compared to a short article later in the bulletin about Iraqi civilian casualties, the tone of the piece was downright cynical; the message was clear — that rare birds are more important than Iraqi

casualties, and that Iraq was probably faking the casualties anyhow.

Another example is what has been completely missing from the news and Les's article. The US claims to have totally destroyed Iraq's "nuclear capability". Iraq possessed two small nuclear reactors, cleared by the International Atomic Energy Agency as non-military as recently as last November.

Indeed, the right to non-military nuclear technology is protected by international treaty. So are the rights of people living near nuclear installations.

A 1977 addition to the Geneva Convention promises "protection of works and installations containing dangerous" material. Even if they are military targets, "they shall not be made the object of attack if such attack

may cause the release of dangerous material from the installations and consequent severe losses among the civilian population". This applies to the bombing of nuclear installations, chemical weapons and nerve gas plants. Commonly such reckless breaches of international conventions are called "war crimes".

Matt Cooper
South London



Anti-war marchers: facing police bans? Photo: John Harris

What are the cops up to?

The poet AE Housman said of footnotes that they "should be used, like spectacles, to aid sight: some people make use of them as if they conferred sight", and the same is true of political slogans.

I took part in Saturday's [2 February] march through London, and one banner I saw said "Victory to Iraq!". Now quite what the people carrying this banner meant by it I don't know:

presumably they mean that Saddam Hussein can carry on repressing the Kurds and the Iraqis just as he likes. I wasn't allowed to ask them, however, because 10 to 15 police came along and removed the banner from the assembling march.

There was no disturbance as the march assembled: everything was quite orderly. In fact, the nearest thing I saw to a breach of the peace was the group of people carrying the confiscated banner arguing with the police, as well they might, considering that their right to express that

opinion was being denied.

This is worrying, for the following reasons:

(1) This country is not, technically, at war with Iraq. Such an opinion is not, therefore, unlawful, so I understand.

(2) No other banner was confiscated in such a manner, as far as I could see. Is this censorship of opinion by the police?

(3) If the banner was confiscated on the grounds of threats to public order, eg. attacks by pro-war groups or the general public, then surely the entire march was such a threat? If so, why wasn't the whole thing banned?

Or are the police hoping to provoke disturbances so that the entire idea of public demonstrations can be discredited, and those that do occur can be even more restricted than they are at present?

We have seen peaceful demonstrations disrupted by police before — just what do they think they're doing?

Stephen Smith
South London

Raising the level

For future historians of our movement, some interesting data.

As the left faces its most severe test for years, how is it debating the vital issues of the Gulf war?

On last Saturday's demonstration an ever-so-revolutionary contingent from Nottingham SWP were

chanting "Where are you, Kinnock?"

When asked by an SO supporter what, exactly, they were doing to put pressure on Kinnock, the reply was "shut up". When the question was repeated, the SWP delivered their clinching argument: "Fuck off Zionist!"

Max Gordon
Walworth

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 7 February

Anti-Gulf war meeting, Crewe & Alsager college, 7.30. Speaker: Mark Sandell
Anti-war activist meeting, Organised by MANUS, 7.30, Manchester Poly
Picket of BBC TV centre to protest about biased Gulf war reporting, 5.30-7.30, Wood Lane, London W12

Friday 8 February

"Crisis in the USSR", Socialist Organiser meeting, Sheffield University SU, 1.200. Speaker: Mark Osborn

Saturday 9 February

Scottish Labour Party Socialists conference, 10.30-5.30, Drummond Community School, Edinburgh. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP
Anti-war demonstration, Assemble 1.30, All Saints, Manchester

Monday 11 February

"Socialist and the Gulf war", Socialist Organiser meeting, 12.30, Luton College. Speaker: Mark Sandell
London Socialist Organiser Forum: "Lessons of the Vietnam anti-war movement", 7.30, LSE. Speaker: John O'Mahony
"Ireland: beyond the slogans", Teesside Poly Labour Club meeting, 6.00. Speaker: Pat Murphy
Media Workers Against the Gulf War meeting, 7.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

Tuesday 12 February

Women Against War in the Gulf meeting, 7.30, Wesley House, Wild Court, Holborn, London

Wednesday 13 February

Debate on the Gulf: Speakers from Socialist Organiser, ILP, Militant, 1.00, Manchester University SU
"Conflict in the Baltics", Socialist Organiser meeting, 7.45, Kings Arms, Lisicard Road, Wallasey. Speaker: Mark Osborn

Saturday 16 February

"A strategy for the Labour left", London LPS Conference, 10.00-5.00, Camden Town Hall
Anti-war demonstration at Portsmouth Naval Base, Assemble 12.00, Guildhall Square

Monday 18 February

"Troops out of the Gulf", organised by Riverside Labour Party, 7.30, Hardman St TU Centre, Liverpool. Speakers include Bob Parry MP

Tuesday 19 February

"Crisis in the USSR", Socialist Organiser meeting, 1.00, Manchester University
Anti-war teach-in organised by the Campaign for Non-Alignment, 7.00, Central London Baptist Church. Speakers include Tony Benn and Bernie Grant

Wednesday 20 February

Day of student anti-war action: "Welfare not warfare" called by the Student Federation Against the Gulf War and Student CND

Two pamphlets that don't make sense

EYE ON THE LEFT

Martin Thomas reviews two new pamphlets from the Socialist Workers Party, *No to war in the Gulf* (50p) and *Socialism and War* (50p)

No to war includes some useful exposures of Bush's and Major's war rhetoric.

It should be handy for people who already know what they think about the war and want ammunition to back up their conclusions. But for anyone genuinely puzzled about the war, or anyone seeking a rounded Marxist understanding of the whole affair, it is useless.

"Although socialists must hope that Iraq gives the US a bloody nose," it declares, "and that the US is frustrated in its attempt to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait, we should have no illusions..."

That reads as if there is some argument for the basic pro-Iraqi stance (the stance despite which we should have no illusions, etc) elsewhere in the pamphlet. But there is no such argument. Not a word!

Perhaps that is why the SWP published a second pamphlet on the Gulf war. *Socialism and war* makes some effort to fill the gap.

The Gulf war, it argues — or rather asserts — is about national liberation, in the same category as the Vietnam war. We should side with Saddam as we sided with Ho Chi Minh.

But *Socialism and war* is mainly a general exposition of Marxist ideas about war (a rather wooden and clumsy one, in my view), and it goes no further into the facts of the Gulf. To see why the SWP analyses the Gulf war as like Vietnam, we have to go back to *No to war*.

With the war underway, it can be argued — indeed, I would argue — that the issues have spread far beyond Kuwait, and Iraq's independence is under threat. To that extent we should side with Iraq.

But *No to war* does not make that argument. In its half-sentence about siding with Iraq — "although socialists must hope that Iraq gives the US a bloody nose", etc — it defines the war as *about Kuwait*.

It seems to locate the 'national liberation' issue, the

analogue of the Vietnamese Stalinists' struggle to unify and free their country, in Iraq's seizure of Kuwait. It is on Kuwait — where Iraq's behaviour is indefensible and monstrous — that it seems to side with Iraq.

Its chapter on Kuwait says nothing about the abuse and oppression of the people living there by the Iraqi military; declares that "the al Sabahs (the Kuwaiti ruling family) were far from being innocent victims of 'Iraqi aggression'" (SWP's scare-quotes — so it wasn't aggression?), and approvingly quotes an "unnamed diplomat from a nearby Gulf emirate" applauding the invasion as a move to stop the West playing off one oil country against another.

Yet the pamphlet never states that the seizure of Kuwait was liberating or progressive. On the contrary: its

"After we chase the argument from one pamphlet to another and back again, it vanishes!"

summary statement is, "Saddam moved into Kuwait not to fight imperialism or to help the Arab people but to get control of the means — oil — to pay back the debts he had incurred waging a war in alliance with imperialism" (emphasis added).

After we chase the argument from one pamphlet to the other and back again, it vanishes! Saddam's anti-imperialism is like the Cheshire Cat: when we look at it, its body disappears, leaving only the smile.

Even stranger, the SWP argues that this same Saddam Hussein, only a couple of years ago, was a mere catspaw of the US. "Saddam" (according to *Socialism and War* "fought an imperialist war on the United States' behalf against Iran in the 1980s" (emphasis original)).

Neither pamphlet offers any explanation for Saddam's supposed switch from imperialist stooge to anti-imperialist. Nor do they consider the more plausible argument that Saddam's attack on Kuwait had just the same basic motive as his attack on Iran: the sub-imperialist ambitions of the Iraqi ruling class.

No to war criticises Saddam Hussein. Yet its denunciation of his regime's "tor-

ture and murder" are perfunctory, devoid of the colourful illustrations given for its condemnations of the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes and, in every case, followed by the word "But..."

The one criticism of Saddam that does get expanded coverage and illustration is that he has not attacked Israel sufficiently. "When war broke out between the Arab states and Israel in 1973, only two divisions of the Iraqi army played any part..." etc.

The chapter on Israel in *No to war* is as baffling as the argument (or lack of it) about supporting Iraq. Most of it is a one-sided list of atrocities from the history of Israel's relations with the Arabs. The point of this list, presumably, is to prove that Israel should be wiped off the map and Saddam should be urged to attack it as hard as possible (or criticised for not doing so). That is nowhere clearly stated, either, but it is the message you get from the half-thoughts.

Why are Israel's atrocities in a different league from Iraq's? Because Israel is "the US's watchdog in the Middle East". "In order to defend their oil supplies in the Gulf, Western powers have backed a state formed on the basis of the expulsion of the Palestinians..."

But how can that make sense? Israel has no oilfields. The West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights have no oilfields. Southern Lebanon has no oilfields. Israel does not directly facilitate Western control over any oil at all.

And when Iraq's invasion of Kuwait threatened US oil interests, the US did not turn to Israel to hit back on its behalf. On the contrary, the alliance it sought was with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and other Arab states. It urged Israel to stay out of the conflict! Right now, Israel is a giant embarrassment for the US, and a major liability.

Just as the SWP assumes that Saddam's attack on Kuwait was anti-imperialist and propagates the idea by hints and half-thoughts, without ever actually arguing it, so here it assumes and propagates a pan-Arab nationalist viewpoint (Israel oppresses the Palestinians, the Palestinians are Arabs, Iraq is Arab, therefore Iraqi attacks on Israel are a blow for freedom) without arguing it.

Nowhere do the two pamphlets rise above the level of threading together strings of illustrations to justify 'anti-imperialist' and 'anti-Israeli attitudes: they never attain the level of coherent argument.

NUT leaders use war to block pay action

By Liam Conway (Notts NUT)

Leeds NUT managed to attract 80 NUT rank and file activists to this conference, despite the unforeseen clash with the national demonstration against the Gulf war.

Their efforts proved worthwhile. The conference soon revealed the insidious intentions of the national union following this year's phased 9.5% government pay offer for teachers. Instead of organising action in defence of their own pay claims of £1500 plus 10%, they intend to block any attempts to build action by using the Gulf

war as an excuse to say that such action would be too unpopular at this time.

The general secretary, Doug McAvoy, may even attempt to imply that strike action at this time would be unpatriotic. If teachers don't believe this they should reflect on the words of McAvoy's TUC master, Norman Willis, as reported in *Socialist Organiser* last week.

How did the Leeds conference respond to these prospects? A motion from Barking and Dagenham argued the need for all-out strike action. Andy Dixon, Executive member for Greater Manchester, moved an amendment which stressed the need to build for action rather than wishing for it.

Nearly everyone agreed that we should link the pay campaign to the government's policies on the Gulf war, where money presents no obstacle to the oil interests of the western powers.

Linking the war and the pay campaign is vital. Teachers are not yet opposed to the war in large numbers. If anything they are confused, like many other workers. This is not surprising considering that the likes of Kinnoch and Willis have out jingied the Tories. Many teachers think that something should be done about Saddam Hussein. They're right, of course, but they are wrong to believe that the UN is acting in the interests of world peace as Kinnoch would have us all believe.

Sooner or later, and with the help of Trade Unionists Opposed to the War, the message that this is an oil war, fought with money



Doug McAvoy

taken from services like education and health, will start to get through.

The pay campaign helps us to make those links. Brigadiers are worth 18% but do no fighting. Soldiers get 12% for dying for the oil barons. Teachers get 9.5% phased in over 12 months. These are excellent ways to start a campaign on salaries to counteract the patriotic crap coming from the union leadership. To their cry that we are traitors to the country we should retort — you are traitors to the class.

The Leeds Conference should mark the starting point of that campaign. All those present, linked either with the Socialist Teachers Alliance or the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union, should move the agreed motions at branch level and use them to put pressure on the leadership. The war has already produced splits in their ranks with several breaking with the right to oppose the war. The salaries campaign, with pressure from below, could widen those splits further and bring on national action on the pay front.

NUJ declares anti-war policy

By Stephen Holt, Taylor & Francis striker

At the NUJ NEC meeting on Saturday 2 February a motion calling on the NUJ to oppose the war was passed with only one NEC member voting against.

The motion condemns the TUC's pro-war stance and calls on all journalists to oppose censorship.

The motion was passed in time for the NUJ national banner to be taken on the national anti-war demonstration. The *Guardian* chapel has voted to condemn the war and the Taylor & Francis chapel are unanimous in opposing the war and calling or troops out.

The fight for reinstatement of ten sacked editors, and union rights at London publishers Taylor & Francis has now entered its third month.

The NUJ NEC meeting on Saturday 2 February voted unanimously to continue to support the strike.

We call on fellow trade unionists to support our next mass picket on Friday 22 February, 12.00 to 2.00 at the Taylor & Francis board meeting, 4 John St, Holborn, London WC1.

Southwark NALGO action

By Roy Webb, Southwark NALGO

Southwark NALGO took two days of strike action last week against the council's latest anti-union attacks on sickness and disciplinary procedure.

The disciplinary procedure the council want would replace a fully negotiated disciplinary code only adopted two years ago. The new procedure excludes all staff on temporary contracts who have no rights at all, and who can be sacked without a hearing. Even permanent staff can be judged guilty before they even have a chance to answer charges against them.

A sickness procedure which is both unfair and unworkable which allows managers to harass staff and threaten those too ill to work with disciplinary action for "sickness absence".

A time off for trade union duties procedure which withdraws recognition from elected shop stewards.

Also, by cutting jobs the council is laying off some staff. However, they have refused to come to a fair negotiated agreement which protects the rights of those who need to be transferred (redeployed) into other jobs when services close down. They also want to take away the rights of the trade unions to monitor redeployment by disregarding existing agreements.

We now need to escalate the action.

A few 'positive developments'

While we regret that sanctions were not given longer to operate, that issue is passed and the positive development which must come out of the war is the enhancement of the authority of the United Nations, its Charter, and Security Council resolutions, following the liberation of Kuwait.

Never mind the grammar, that was the real meat of the TUC's press statement on the Gulf War following the General Council meeting of 23 January.

But even the bureaucracy is not 100% behind this sort of jingoism: the TGWU's Ron Todd had a heated row with Willis over the statement, protesting that it had not been discussed by the TUC's international sub-committee.

So far Todd has not dared publicly to distance himself from the statement and it remains to be seen whether the union's 'Broad Left' majority will have the bottle to come out for their own avowed policy of calling for a ceasefire in the Gulf when the Finance and General Purposes Committee meets this week.

The leaderships of MSF, FBU, BETA and the NUM have all sponsored the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. SOGAT has called for a cease-fire. But only one General Secretary was to be



By Sleeper

TUC position or have yet to take a clear stand one way or the other.

This is noticeably the case amongst workers who are directly affected by the hypocrisy and double-standards surrounding the war: media workers and health workers. 'Media Workers Against the War' held a very successful rally two weeks ago and shows a lot of promise. It is planning a mass rally and acts as a clearing house for important alternative media initiatives such as *War Report*.

Meanwhile, hostility to the war amongst health workers has been aroused by the miraculous sudden availability of unlimited funds to keep wards open: anti-war groups now exist in a number of hospitals and the basis clearly exists for a national campaign among health service trade unionists.

Something similar seems to be taking place within the NUT, as teachers are forced to take a stand in the face of war-inspired racism in schools. The NUT itself has not taken a position on the war, but 13 executive members (including Deputy General Secretary Mary Huffard) have signed a strongly-worded anti-war statement, 'regretting' the role of the Labour and TUC leadership.

The biggest difficulties (and challenges) arise in manufacturing. The big motor and engineering factories have always been a target for racists,

CPSA activist victimised

By a CPSA DE London activist

John Williams, Treasurer of DE Plymouth Area CPSA branch, and a supporter of *Socialist Organiser*, was sacked last month by the Employment Service (ES) Agency management.

His sacking follows over a year of victimisation by management. In 1989 management began inefficiency action on trumped up allegations of "poor conduct" and other counts. Management alleged that absences due to sickness and trade union duties had caused "a poor working relationship". Yet it was management who had failed to provide cover for these absences in an apparent attempt to engender discontent. In the reporting year prior to inefficiency proceedings there were no reportable incidents.

What followed the initial inefficiency action can only be described as a bare-faced attempt by management to rid their offices of an active trade union representative.

Using a trumped-up charge of "shouting and swearing at a supervisor" (denied by John; the swearing charge was later dropped), management announced a second trial period six months later. From hereon management sought to create reportable incidents out of nothing — eg. "slamming down a phone" after a caller had rung off!

A few weeks into the second trial period suspension was imposed following damage to a door. When management trawled for statements alleging malicious intent, the overwhelming majority of staff said it was clearly an accident. Management claimed two statements, the contents of which they refused to reveal!

Management then began to search for a second incident to trigger disciplinary action and eventually came up with a VDU keyboard being "slammed" onto a desk!

Regional management wanted dismissal. But ES HQ decided to issue a reprimand and dock pay. So management switched to inefficiency proceedings and claimed the second trial period could not be satisfied. The DE personnel handbook clearly states that action on conduct cannot be switched between the disciplinary or inefficiency categories, it must be, and remain, one or the other.

Three weeks before John's sacking, a diagnosis of medical problems was produced. Management implied absences were not genuine by using sick leave to take proceedings on

CPSA Branches Against Agencies Conference

Saturday 9 March
Josiah Mason Lecture Theatre, Chamberlain Sq
Birmingham
11.00-4.00
Delegate from branches £5
More details from Mark Serwotka, Secretary BAA, 17 Belgrave Square, Sheffield
0742 507320

grounds of conduct. They refused to convene an independent medical tribunal or even consult John's doctor.

John's sacking is an outrage, a clear case of victimisation by management. Equally appalling is the failure of his Broad Left '84-led branch to publicise the case and mount a campaign in his defence.

John's case clearly shows the dangers of Agencies, with Agency managers feeling the pressure to take a hard-line towards trade union so-called "troublemakers". In the DE victimisations are occurring across the country. It is vital that sections and the union nationally publicise what is going on and take notice of the evidence building up. The left in the CPSA warned that victimisation of trade union activists would be

one result of Agencies. We were right.

In John's case, management do not care if they lose an Industrial Tribunal appeal. Cost in terms of management time and financial compensation are of secondary importance to ridding offices of activists — activists who will lead a fight against Agency management attacks on members' jobs, wages and conditions.

DSS strikers

By Steve Hughes, NUCPS, Wallasey DSS

On Thursday NUCPS officials will be meeting nationally with the DSS about the dispute.

It's unclear whether this is because they're going to make us an offer or whether they're going to stop all negotiations.

On the same day ordinary NUCPS members from across the 15 offices on strike will be meeting together in Chesterfield. The meeting was initiated by strikers in the Mansfield office as a way for ordinary members to get together, discuss what's happening in the dispute, pool our ideas and hopefully come up with some common strategy for taking the strike forward. Our branch are still keen on escalating the action through a rolling programme of strikes across the country.

As we go to press the NUCPS leadership have reached an agreement with DSS management. Details are as yet unclear. Full report in next week's SO.

Socialists and the Trade Unions

A Socialist Organiser/Workers Liberty industrial school

Saturday & Sunday 9 & 10 February 1991
Mandela Building, Manchester Polytechnic
Students Union, Oxford Road, Manchester

Saturday 9 February
Registration 10.30

11.30
Trade Unionists and War
Speakers include: Andy Dixon (NUT Executive), Manchester healthworker, Solidarity Committee with the striking Turkish miners
1.00-2.00

Lunch 2.00

Arguing socialism in the workplace

A special series of group discussions on arguments about the war at work
3.30

Workshops: OILC: the story of rank and file organisation in the North Sea, Willy Stephenson (OILC): Struggles in industry during World War 2; Trade Union Dues: a new initiative, Sheila Cohen; Workplace bulletins: why we produce them

Sunday 10th

10.00

Workshops: Industrial action in the public services: the case for and against emergency cover; A European Working Women's Charter; What do we mean by a rank and file movement?
11.30

Strike strategy

A series of group discussions on how to fight and how to win.
1.00-1.45

Lunch

1.45

Workshops: Fighting sexual harassment at work, Jean Lane (author of *Woman in a Man's Job*); How to beat the anti-union laws and the campaign for a workers' charter; All out forever tomorrow?: the case for selective action in the public services.
3.15

Drawing the lessons

3.45

Close

Cost £5 waged/£2.50 unwaged; £1 per session. For more information write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

and disputes are now arising over issues like the *Sun* Union Jack.

At Land Rover, Solihull, for instance, the Works Committee had to make a difficult decision over whether or not to defend workers who'd been threatened with disciplinary action for refusing to remove *Sun* flags.

The Committee eventually decided to back the workers against management, which was obviously correct. But they should have taken the opportunity to urge workers to remove the flags, and to have had a proper discussion on the whole issue — not least the effects that *Sun*-inspired 'patriotism' is having upon a lot of black and Asian workers. The Works Committee backed away from this.

But it's all very well for the left to slag off people like the Land Rover stewards: in the absence of any lead from the AEU and the TGWU, it is hardly surprising that they reacted in the way they did. That's why the outcome of this week's TGWU committee meeting (which, in theory, has an anti-war majority) is so important. And it's why the TUC press statement is such a disgrace, even by Norman Willis's miserable standards.

P.S. questioned on Saturday's demo as to whether the NGA had any official position on the war, Tony Dubbins replied: "Oh, yes, lots. Depending on the time of day and the day of the week."

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Psychiatric victims of war to be hidden from public

By a health worker **T**he Ministry of Defence has decided that NHS hospitals won't treat

psychiatric victims from the Gulf war.

The change in plans was announced at a *secret* briefing to consultants in late January. Why? especially after dozens of acute psychiatric wards had already been "cleared".

The psychiatric victims of the war will show the reality of "collateral damage" and "carpet bombing" — day after day of explosions and other people's screams searing their eardrums, the disorientation of days or weeks without sleep, the agonies of lying with untreated wounds as the world goes mad around them...those victims will relive the horrors daily, or retreat from the world that holds too many terrors.

Those victims, and their condition, aren't easy to make into "heroes" — however much sympathy people feel, they are hard to face up to. The overwhelming reaction is anger at the people who could unleash those horrors on them, and not least the generals who posted the soldiers to the front, or ordered the artillery to fire.

The military want to hide those victims — from the press and the general public, but perhaps from their relatives and friends too — in the military hospitals.

But they have other reasons...the "cure" now put forward for the less severe results of shell-shock is to get the soldiers back to the front fast.

If soldiers are too ill for that the MoD doesn't want to repeat the experience after World War 2 when thousands of victims, incapable of ever working again, could claim war pensions. They time they'll be "unfit for service"; but the military can declare them "fit" to be sent back to families who can't cope, or onto the streets.

Sooner or later, of course, most will find their way into some form of NHS "care", if it's still available, but without any pension — that would be an admission of the generals' guilt.

Build "Labour Against the War"!

By Cate Murphy

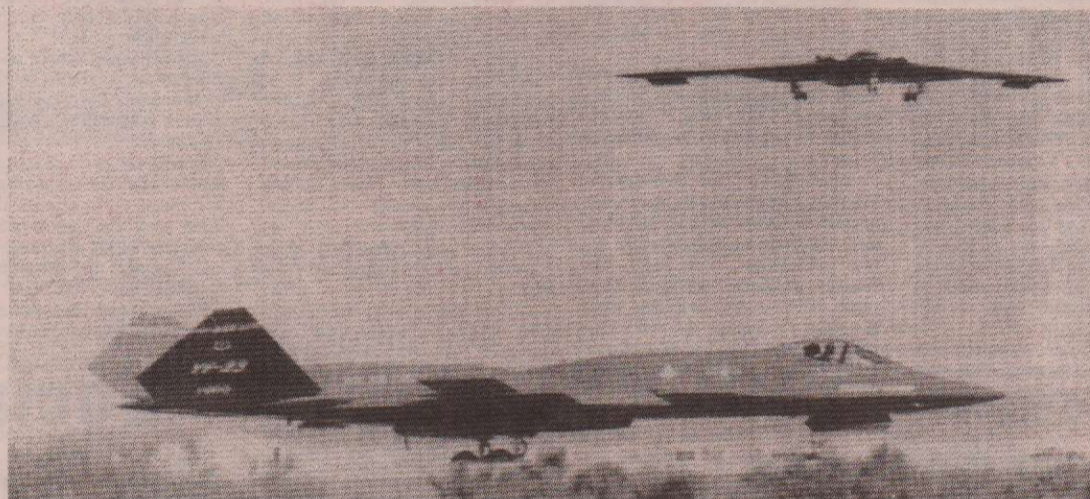
War puts everything to the test. It has put the Labour leaders to the test and shown them up for a crowd of second-string warmongers with less sense of responsibility than even the out and out bourgeois opposition in the US Congress.

They at least dared to question the wisdom of war. Neil Kinnock didn't dare. Verbally, the Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock has been more "hawkish" than the Tory prime minister John Major.

This war puts the Labour left to the test as well. Is it as dead as its enemies on the left and right have said? Or can it rise to the occasion?

Many on the left have been biding their time, hoping that maybe Kinnock's "respectable" line would get the Tories voted out. They couldn't see much alternative anyway.

The war changes that. It is clear that either the left will shake itself alive again, and resume the fight for the soul of the Labour Party, or else Kinnock and his team of careerists



will drag the working class deeper and deeper into the mud, blood and slaughter of this imperialist war.

Labour left wingers have been demonstrating on the streets — and going to Party wards and constituency General Committee meetings to vote against Kinnock's line. The Labour Left is coming alive again.

Now "Labour Against the War" is being launched. It has two aims:

- to organise the fight of

Labour Party members and supporters against the war;

- and to organise Labour Party members within the Party — and recruit new Party members — in a fight to get

Labour to repudiate Kinnock and the Labour front bench, and to come out against this war! To come out militant, campaigning, and determined to stop the slaughter!

An appeal to activists

We believe it is urgently necessary to organise opposition to the Gulf war at all levels of the Labour Party.

Towards this end we are proposing to hold an initial organising meeting...

This meeting and the "Labour

Against the War" campaign it will launch will be open to all Labour Party members, affiliates and Labour Party campaigns. We urge you to attend and participate.

- Dennis Skinner
- Alice Mahon
- Tony Benn
- Narendra Makanji
- Joan Twelves
- Jeremy Corbyn
- Eric Heffer
- Peter Heathfield
- Roger Mackenzie
- Peter Tatchell

Trade unionists must say: Stop the war now!

Lobby the TUC!

As trade unionists we should all protest at the support given by the TUC General Council for the war in the Gulf.

This will be a ghastly and bloody war with incalculable long-term consequences for the people of the Middle East and the whole world.

Press reports state that the British involvement in the war is costing £30 million a day. We must demand that this criminal waste of resources be stopped and the money spent on education, health and other public services.

As trade unionists, therefore, we must commit ourselves to winning the support of the whole trade union movement for opposition to the war.

Please join us on the lobby of the TUC General Council, or if that is not possible, sponsor the lobby.

Called by the NUJ Book Branch initial sponsors so far include: Tony Benn MP, Kyran Connolly (NUJ Executive), Jim Boumelha (FoC Pergamon Strikers, NUJ Executive), Andy Smith (FoC Taylor and

Labour's anti-war voice

Sales of the new *Socialist Organiser* pamphlet on *War in the Gulf* made a good start on the anti-war demonstration last Saturday, 2 February, with two comrades selling 63 copies between them, and others also doing well.

The pamphlet — reviewed on the centre pages of the paper this week — is a handy summing-up of our basic anti-war arguments.

As the tabloids and the TV hammer away with their pro-war propaganda, it is vital to get the anti-war message out; and only the left press is carrying that

anti-war message. Sales of the paper went well last Saturday, too. Some sellers reported a particularly good response when they identified the paper as an anti-war voice within the Labour Party.

With donations from readers in Sheffield and North London, our running total on our fund drive for £25,000 inches up to £13,617. The winner of the £100 prize in this month's draw from our '200 Club' will be announced this week.

Donations to, and '200 Club' forms from, SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Subscribe to Socialist Organiser!

Socialist Organiser is the only paper on the left with the clear, unambiguous message: Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

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Oppose this war!

From front page

East conference to ensure that UN resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian situation are accepted and a settlement reached.

Your statement and the somewhat tortuous article in today's [30 January] *Guardian* by Gerald Kaufman that Labour is against the destruction of the Iraqi state are welcome, but surely we must go further. Labour should not support any hidden agenda likely to emerge from President Bush and our Tory government.

You may believe that by pursuing this path over the Gulf, this will bring electoral advantage. That may or may not be the case, but for once could we not put Labour's principles of working for peace before considerations of electoral gain?

I believe there is no real support in Britain or Europe for the war. The Pope has clearly shown his opposition, as have the Italian and German people. The resignation of M Chevenement in France indicates the depth of the opposition in that country. Surely, it is time for Labour to have another look at the situation and whilst continuing to condemn Saddam, help bring peace to the area by changing our policy before it is too late.

Eric Heffer MP