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centre pages

War and
the Arab
world



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For Workers' Liberty!



For socialist renewal!

Liberalism
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against the war
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

Labour's anti-war voice

Bring them home now!



"The best way to support our troops is to bring them home."

That's what Tony Benn MP said to the TV cameras during one of last weekend's demonstrations.

That is what *Socialist Organiser* says!

It is the right answer for the left to make to the baying chauvinist tabloids and those influenced by them.

It is *natural* and *understandable* that British working class people should be concerned for their sons and brothers and neighbours who will face bullets and gas and god knows what else when the land war begins.

The treacherous bar room heroes who write the *Sun* and the *Star* exploit this natural identification to whip up support for the Tory war in the Gulf.

You care about the British boys in uniform? they ask — then back the war.

Support and sympathy with their own is thus sneakily translated into support for a needless war in which many thousands of them will be killed.

We say: if you truly care about them then oppose this war and demand that they be brought home. Now!

The alternative is to wait until they start coming home in coffins and bodybags.

We say: bring the British troops home, now!

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

The lie machine



Last week, a lot of people who support the war felt their stomachs turn over when news came through that allied bombs had bombed a civilian air raid shelter and killed hundreds of Iraqi women and children.

Many will have begun to ask themselves if the war still makes sense. But not the Sun or the Star or Today.

Daily Express

LIFE WITH LORD ALTHORP'S GIRL THE MAGIC OF SEX

OUTRAGE OVER BBC WAR BIAS

The war in the Gulf is being used by the press lords to sharpen their vendetta against the BBC, which they want ultimately to abolish.

In fact both the BBC and ITN have agreed to lace their reports from inside Iraq even more heavily with warnings that it may be Iraqi propaganda.

Sun BIG MACS IN BUG ALERT

SINEAD THE SHE DEVIL

LADY S GIVES RAIDERS STICK!

And what had 'Sinead the She Devil' actually said? She accused the "Allies" of double dealing and hypocrisy! Still, the story allowed them to serve up a magic mix of pop music and the war on Page 1.



10,000 march for lesbian and gay rights

Defeat Clause 25 and Paragraph 16!

Over 10,000 people marched through central London on Saturday 16 February in protest at the latest government attack on lesbian and gay rights.

Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill, which gives judges stronger powers in 'sexual offences'; Paragraph 16, which effectively prohibits lesbians and gay men from fostering children; and Operation Spanner, which led to the arrest and harsh sentencing of men involved in

consenting sado-masochistic sex, are the worst attacks since 1967.

The response from the lesbian and gay community, as Saturday's demonstration showed, is the biggest since Clause 28 in 1988.

The demonstration was called by the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, which will be holding an open meeting in the next few weeks to consider calling a lesbian and gay rights conference.

The Coalition meets every Sunday afternoon at the London lesbian and gay centre.

Students move against the war

By Mark Sandell

College student unions and Area organisations of the National Union of Students all over the country are taking action against the war as we go to press.

The slogan 'Welfare not Warfare' is the theme of today's action (20 February); and students are highlighting the cost of this bloody war and comparing it to the cuts made in education, the NHS, social security and housing.

In Kent students are leafletting the town centre, using local hospital cuts as a focus, following this with a picket of the local Territorial Army offices and a public meeting.

In Manchester students have organised a teach-in; leafletting further education colleges, putting emphasis on the cuts made in the sector as a result of the poll tax, comparing it to money spent on the war and pointing out that to many young working class people 'joining up' is their best opportunity of learning a trade.

Similarly in Liverpool, Leeds, Wakefield, Sheffield, Teeside, Newcastle and Stoke students are picketing army recruitment offices and TA barracks handing out leaflets calling for 'Welfare not Warfare'.

With the support of students from over 71 colleges, the Federation recognises the need to build a broad based democratic anti-war campaign.

Unfortunately, so far, the National Union of Students (NUS) Kinnockite leadership have done nothing to build the anti-war campaign.

In this they have something in common with the sectarian left.

The SWP and Socialist Action comfort each other in their London-based Student Committee to Stop the War. The committee itself is a positive initiative, regrettably so far it has failed to go out to the colleges and involve students other than SWP members.

The SFAWG wants to do joint work with all anti-war campaigns. The priority for the Federation is to stop the war. This can only be done through mass participation in anti-war activities.



Mark Sandell, a member of the National Union of Students executive, was one of five people arrested at a sit-down demonstration in Parliament Square on 15 January. The case will be heard at 10.00am, Horseferry Road Magistrates Court, on 10 April.

Secret trials in China

The Beijing regime is in the process of putting the most prominent democracy movement people through secret trials.

Some have already been sentenced. So far the sentences range from two years to seven years for Ren Wanding, a veteran campaigner dating back to the Democracy Wall movement of 1979.

The sentences appear to reflect the Communist Party's attitude to the accused, rather than the nature of any alleged crime. One or two have been spared a prison sentence for

"showing repentance". We believe that the prisoners have been subjected to intense interrogation and harsh treatment over a very long period, and inevitably the regime has been able to extract a number of such "repentances" through torture.

We call on all our supporters to protest most strongly to the Chinese government and to demand that the British and EC governments do not resume a "business as usual" attitude in their diplomatic dealings

Contact the Chinese Solidarity Campaign, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1

Anti-war purge is halted — for now

By Mark Osborn

The drive by leading members of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf to divide and disorient the anti-war movement has been halted and deflected, but not conclusively defeated.

Their attempt to purge everyone who does not agree with a detailed 15 point platform has been abandoned, but new affiliations are still being blocked.

On Monday February 4th, the Committee decided to block new affiliations. On Monday 11th the Committee's chair, Marjorie Thompson of CND, and secretary Carol Turner of Socialist Action moved that all groups not signing the 15 points be excluded.

The Committee voted to postpone the decision, whereupon the officers met and announced to the press that they had "reconstituted" the Committee to include only those signing the 15 points.

On Saturday 16th the CND council forced Thompson and Turner to retreat. When the

Committee met on Monday 18th, Mary Brennan of CND announced from the chair that four new points, not the old 15, were being proposed as the basis of the Committee.

Bernie Grant MP asked for an explanation of the press reports of the Committee being "reconstituted" but was fobbed off. The Socialist Workers' Party proposed that the basis of

"The purge has been abandoned, but new affiliations are still blocked."

the Committee should be simply "Stop the War Now!"

The SWP proposal had more weighty support than the four points — Black Sections, National Union of Students, RMT London, and all the Labour MPs there except Ken Livingstone — but an obscure voting system saw it defeated by 9 votes to 28. The winning side included the Green Party, CND, the two Communist

Parties (Morning Star and Marxism Today) and Socialist Action.

The four points are less detailed and divisive than the old 15. They are:

- Immediate ceasefire and convening of a Middle East peace conference;
- The withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the withdrawal of allied forces;
- A rejection of any call for victory to either side, Iraq or America;
- Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupies, and self-determination for all the peoples of the region.

Moreover, it looks as if groups like the SWP which disagree with those four points will not be excluded.

However, the road ahead is still far from clear! The four points seem to imply that the withdrawal of US and British forces should be conditional on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

The politics are still crazy: why are such points being pushed by Socialist Action (which privately says "Victory to Iraq!") and by the Communist Parties (which long supported Saddam Hussein)?

The status of the four points is still unclear, and the

opportunity remains for them to be used against groups which disagree with them (like the SWP) or which have no mandate for such a wide-ranging policy (like "Labour Against the War").

And at the meeting on the 18th, stewards stood at the door selectively excluding groups which applied for affiliation long ago from even attending as observers. Socialist Organiser, Socialist Outlook and the London Region of the MSF were excluded.

The meeting retreated a little from its blanket ban on all new affiliations, but postponed consideration of any new such affiliations to the end of a lengthy rigmorale.

Finally, CND leaders, who have helped push through many of the Committee's dubious decisions by threatening that otherwise CND will pull out, announced that CND will not be mobilising for the Committee's next anti-war demonstration on 2 March.

The anti-war movement needs a broad co-ordinating committee, with an open and loose structure, based on the simple demand: Stop the War Now! We still don't have it.

We still need to fight for it.

Why you should sell Socialist Organiser

Time to make choices

War concentrates politics. It brings into sharp focus political choices which normally remain in a middle-distance blur.

Either you oppose the war *actively*, and you oppose it *now* — or you go along with it. Saying you will oppose it some other time, sidelining it for some other issue — these are not options.

Usually socialist ideas have to make their way through a haze of scepticism, indifference, half-contemptuous tolerance, and cynicism. Socialism? A good idea — but is it possible? And will all these meetings and all those newspapers and leaflets really help?

Class struggle? Oh yes. But most disputes are someone else's, somewhere else.

War polarises politics. Some people rally to the patriotic flag; others — a minority so far, but the numbers will grow — decide that now they must put their general support for peace and democracy into *action*.

Some people want the left press driven from the streets because it is unpatriotic. Others value these voices of opposition to the mass media's roar of war propaganda. Fewer can't be bothered either way.

So sales of *Socialist Organiser* (and no doubt of the rest of the left press) have increased since the start of the Gulf war.

We appeal to those new readers to become regular sellers. We appeal to those who already sell the paper regularly to canvass all their readers, asking them too to become sellers.

This drive for more regular sellers is not an alternative to broad anti-war agitation — but it is not a sectarian diversion from it either.



The two souls of Labour — Tony Benn...

If at the end of the war, looking back, those of us grouped around this paper can say that we did excellent work helping to build the broad anti-war movement, we won wide respect, we had the right suggestions for policy and the right criticisms of other policies — but we didn't gain many more regular sellers of *SO* and organise for our policies, then we will have proved ourselves not "non-sectarian" but irresponsible.

If we are "so busy" with broad anti-war work that we can't find time to talk to other activists about socialist politics, then we are like strike leaders so busy with their dispute that they don't organise a strong trade union structure to carry on afterwards.

"Winning more regular sellers for Socialist Organiser is not just a matter of helping to build a better anti-war movement now and against wars to come. It is a matter of pursuing the struggle against the roots of war."

Anti-war protests in Britain have been hindered by unnecessary splits and divisions in the anti-war movement. *SO* has been one of the very few publications arguing for a *united* movement. The pity of it is that we have not been strong enough to proceed to build such a movement, leaving the squabblers to their squabbles and irresponsibility!

And winning more regular sellers

for *Socialist Organiser* is not just a matter of helping to build a better anti-war movement now and against wars to come. It is a matter of pursuing the struggle against the *roots* of war.

Consider three propositions:
1. **Capitalism causes war.**
There is no absolute shortage of energy-sources in the world. If the world's oil reserves were owned in common, and their use controlled democratically, there would be no cause for war, but only for debate on the advantages of different energy-sources and different rates of using those reserves.

Private ownership of the means of production means that most of the world's oil reserves are owned and controlled by a tiny minority of kings, emirs, sheikhs, dictators; and profiteers. They enjoy unimaginable riches while hundreds of millions starve. And they fight each other for even more of those riches! If need be, they fight each other with missiles, bombs, tanks, and poison gas!

That is what the Gulf war is about. To cut the roots of war, we must cut the roots of capitalism.

2. **The force that can replace capitalism with something better is the organised working class.** No society in the history of the world has remained unchanged for ever. Nor will this one.

Every society has seen a struggle between different classes — a struggle that has led to a new class rising, taking power, and remodelling the state in its own interests. Capitalism has produced the working class.

It is a class thrown together and concentrated in large and closely

intertwined units, forced to struggle collectively to defend its day-to-day interests. It is a class that forms free collective organisations to fight for those interests. It is the only class that stands consistently opposed to the bosses.

"The world's oil resources are owned and controlled by a tiny minority of kings, emirs, sheikhs, dictators and profiteers. They enjoy unimaginable riches while hundreds of millions starve. And they fight each other for even more of these riches!"

Even in Eastern Europe, where, for now, the great majority of workers see capitalism as the best society possible, the workers are fighting against private profiteers, against job cuts, against wage cuts, for social control over the economy.

Socialists must look to the working class — and to the *organised* working class, for organisation is necessary to win. Whatever sectarians like the SWP may wish, they cannot build their own, new, labour movement alongside the existing one: there is no alternative to the struggle to renovate and reorient the existing labour movement, Labour Party and trade unions.

3. **We must fight imperialism both East and West.** The collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the

USSR is not the collapse of socialism, not even the collapse of some bureaucratically deformed version of socialism. It is the collapse of a system of bureaucratic state exploitation constructed *against* the working class, a collapse which opens the way for the working class to organise, to debate, and thus to begin to find the way to liberation.

The USSR's crackdown in the Baltic states is no less imperialist than the US-British assault in the Gulf.

Those three propositions sum up the basic message of *Socialist Organiser*. If you agree, help us spread that message.

The time to make choices and commitments is now.

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...or the craven cowardice of Kinnock

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

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Another downward adjustment

There has been a whole raft of statistics, reports, forecasts published over the last week or so, all carrying much the same message: the recession is deepening and the worst is yet to come.

The official unemployment figures showed a 46,200 rise to 1.9 million for January; investment fell 15% in the last quarter of 1990; manufacturing output fell 3% in the last quarter compared to the previous three months (the biggest drop since 1981); the number of workers employed in manufacturing fell by 30,000 in December and by 112,000 over the year, to a total of 5 million — the lowest since 1959.

But here's a funny thing: at the same time as all this, the underlying increase in average earnings was 9.75% (December) and unit wage costs rose to 12.5% — the highest for ten years. The Bank of England's quarterly report unerringly fingered the Number One culprit — our old friend, the greedy worker. Businesses will suffer further losses of competitiveness and unemployment will continue to rise unless there is a "significant downward adjustment of wage settlements".

The TUC, normally only too ready to produce some self-important, platitudinous commentary on economic matters, has yet to offer us the benefit of its wisdom on these latest statistics. Just as well, perhaps. We can all guess what Brother Willis would have to say: something along the lines of "very worrying developments...need for a cut in interest rates...we must all work together in partnership...responsible attitude to wages needed...all must shoulder the burden... blah, blah, blah". You may recall that our Norman has already offered the Tories what amounts to a Social Contract deal on wages, while the dynamic duo of Tuffin and Edmonds have been busy preparing their grand master plan for a "National Economic Assessment".

Happily, this kind of talk has so far been largely ignored on the shop floor and (with a few notable exceptions) wages militancy remains largely unaffected by the need to keep Great Britain afloat. It is a widely-held myth (on both left and right) that economic slump automatically depresses shopfloor militancy (remember the SWP's all-pervasive "downturn theory"?). In fact, the working class can react very differently, depending upon its own immediate experience and the state of its organisation. The slump of the late 1920s decimated the British trade union movement in the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike. But in America, the same slump helped spark the successful drive for mass industrial trade unions.

In fact, British shopfloor organisation survived the recession of the early 1980s and the Tories' subsequent anti-union drive, remarkably well. The predicted mass de-unionisation of major industries did not occur and in key sectors like motors and engineering, the density of union organisation was scarcely affected at all. The great weakness, however, is political. The arguments of economic "viability" remain powerful, not just amongst the bureaucrats but also at shopfloor level. Witness the recent passive acceptance of thousands of job cuts (in the form of voluntary redundancy, early retirement, etc) at Fords, Jaguar, Peugeot and Rover.



A fairly classic example of just where acceptance of the "viability" argument leads is to be found in this week's *Independent on Sunday*: AEU President Bill Jordan writes about "My Biggest Mistake", which (with the benefit of hindsight) Bro Jordan reckons to have been attempting to defend Longbridge Convenor Derek Robinson against victimisation in 1980.

Jordan's account of this sorry affair is a predictably transparent attempt to cover his own tracks and those of the AEU President at the time, the late and unlamented Terry Duffy.

Nevertheless, Jordan lets the cat out of the bag: BL boss Michael Edwards had been "empowered to reform BL or close it"; Robinson was sacked simply because he opposed Edwards' "draconian plans" and the AEU's investigation "showed conclusively that he had been unfairly dismissed"; nevertheless (according to Jordan) what was really at stake was the "simple truth", understood by Terry Duffy, "that this was really about whether BL was to have a future or close", and when the workforce voted to reject Robinson, "they were signalling to the world that they knew the way things were done in their plant had to change."

This is the nearest that an AEU leader has ever come to publicly admitting that the union connived with BL management over the Robinson affair. But Jordan's case makes sense if you operate within the laws of capitalism: BL was on the rocks and Edwards probably would have closed it all down if he hadn't got his way. Robinson represented opposition (albeit very inadequate) to the Edwards plan and Duffy and Co. were quite right to cooperate with his victimisation — from the point of view of the kind of trade unionism that accepts "viability" as the be-all and end-all, for those of us who don't, of course, it was just plain scabbing.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Israel/Palestine: "army is worried there

Clampdowns

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

On Friday 50 Israeli peace activists attempted to take food to a West Bank refugee camp; on Saturday a similar number went to the Gaza strip with the same intention. The food was to help hungry Arab people living under the current curfew in the West Bank and Gaza.

The activists managed to get through a number of checkpoints in the West Bank, but were turned away by soldiers at the entrance to the refugee camp.

In the Gaza Strip they were more successful. The army tried to stop the UNRWA officials and imposed a special curfew. A higher official came and let them through.

The UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Association. Since 1948 it has had for the Palestinians many of the functions of government — social services, education and so on. It has an ambiguous position: many of its workers are Palestinians but it is controlled by the UN.

The curfew is not as tight as it was at the start of the Gulf War when it was imposed. There was real hunger. Some people were not allowed into hospital.

Palestinian workers

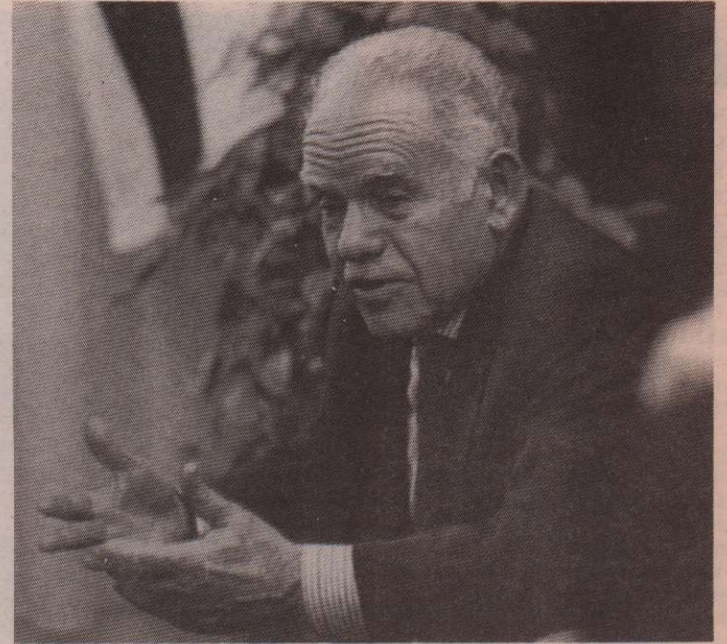
The government are using the curfew to reduce the numbers of Palestinian workers coming over the Green Line to work in Israel. Moves in this direction actually started before the war, from October last year.

In October last year after the killings at Temple Mount there were several days of total closure of the Occupied Territories. It was found to be impossible to maintain. On the one hand it generated very big social tension, on the other it damaged the Israeli economy.

But now the war and the curfew has given the right a pretext. They want to let only Palestinian workers who are registered with the Israeli authorities work in Israel. Only about one third of the 120,000 Palestinian workers are registered. Those workers either travel to Israel everyday or sleep illegally in Israel.

The government want to give the employers the responsibility of making sure that the Palestinian workers are well controlled while they are in Israel.

I have just heard that today (Sun-



Shamir — until recently a friend of the US

day 17 February) only 11,000 Palestinians were allowed into Israel to work. Those who are not allowed to work are obviously now unemployed. It is very serious.

The officials are saying that they want the number of these workers reduced from 120,000 to 40,000

However, there are pressures from the employers who benefit from the cheap Palestinian labour to let these workers in — especially from the building contractors and the farmers. Interestingly, Sharon, the Minister of Housing who needs Palestinian labour to build houses for the incoming Russian Jews, is also pressing for more labour.

The farmers are complaining that the oranges are rotting because there are no workers. They have tried to send Russian immigrants, soldiers and high school students to do the work. But the farmers complain that these people are not skilled and only do a quarter of the work of the Palestinians.

The government plan to replace the Palestinians with Russian Jews. But many of these people are academics and other professionals — there are doubts if this will be possible.

Also, the Russian immigration has slowed down a lot because of the war. Since the start of the war only 3,000 have arrived.

People do not want to come to a country where they are issued with gas masks when they arrive. The people who are arriving now are either fanatical Zionists or have no choice because they have sold their

homes, taken their visas and have to travel now.

More and more Russian Jews are trying to find alternatives to Israel. The Jews in Germany are trying to increase their strength and encouraging Russian Jews to come to Germany.

Israeli economy slumps

The Israeli economy is heading into sharp recession.

For three days at the start of the war the economy came to a standstill. There is the question of who should pay for this. The Histadrut is negotiating with the government. It seems that the workers, employers and government will each pay for one day.

Shops are selling less.

The curfew in the occupied territories is fuelling the slump.

Many women workers did not go to work for two weeks as the schools were shut and they were looking after children. The manpower manager of the Tel Aviv Municipality is saying that the fact that so many women did not come to work proves that women are unreliable workers.

The Histadrut have called off all labour disputes for the duration of the war. They say that "the economy is a weapon we should continue to work to win the war". There are negotiations for a package deal between the Histadrut and the government. The government wants to cut salaries by attacking the mechanism which ties wages to inflation. This sliding scale of wages has existed since the '50s. It is a major achievement of the workers. In the last 15 years the employers have continually tried to cut it so that wages do not compensate for the whole price rise — but for 80 or 70 percent of them.

Palestinian unemployment

Among the Arabs of the Occupied Territories there are no official unemployment figures but unemployment is very high. The army is worried that soon there will be an explosion of discontent.

There is no unemployment benefit for unemployed Palestinians.

The Arab workers from the Occupied Territories pay tax but receive very little in return. Arabs who work in Israel pay the Israeli tax rate; those who live and work in the West Bank pay the lower Jordanian tax rate to the Israeli government. International law says that the occupying power must tax in

We present below the report of the Palestine Human Rights Information Center:

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS SUMMARY DATA
UPRISING, YEARS 1, 2, AND 3: DECEMBER 9, 1987 THROUGH DECEMBER 8, 1990

VIOLATION	YEAR ONE	YEAR TWO	YEAR THREE	TOTAL
	Dec 9/87 to Dec 8/88	Dec 9/88 to Dec 8/89	Dec 9/89 to Dec 8/90	UPRISING TOTAL
DEATHS	380	345	165	890
Shot	283	312	146	741
Non-Bullet Cause	32	19	10	61
Tear-gas Related	65	14	9	88
SERIOUS INJURIES	46,000 (est)	34,000 (est)	25,000 (est)	105,000
EXPULSIONS (EDR)	32	26	-	58
Orders	56	0	56	
ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION (orders)	5000 (est)	3500 (est)	4000 (est)	12,500
CURFEWS	3338	3054	2284	8676
West Bank	1906	1226	1421	4553
Gaza	1432	1828	863	4123
TREES UPROOTED	23,440	54,258	17,189	94,887
DEMOLITIONS & SEALINGS	584	621	521	1726
Of Houses "for security reasons"				
- Demolished	108	154	150	412
- Sealed	23	107	126	256
Of Unlicensed Buildings (mostly houses)				
- Demolished	425	319	241	985
Indirect* Demolitions	28	41	1	70
By Settlers			3	3
PERSONS DISPLACED**	5000+	5500+	4500+	15,000+

* Indirect Demolition: rendering of house uninhabitable in the process of demolition of neighboring house (especially when explosives employed)
** Persons displaced, is rendered homeless [** - footnotes by AIC]

will soon be an explosion"

in the West Bank



Palestinians in Jordan demonstrate in support of Saddam

this way. The tax money supposedly goes into a fund for the welfare of these people, but in fact it is taken by the government.

Israel and the US

The US is not happy with Israel. Last week the Israeli Ambassador in Washington was publicly rebuked by Bush and Baker. This concerns the demand of the Israeli government for a \$400 million loan to house Soviet immigrants. The Americans have tied it up with a demand not to house the immigrants in the Occupied Territories.

Sharon as the Housing Minister has made plans for large scale building in the Occupied Territories. This was exposed by Knesset members from Mapam and Ratz.

So the US have held the money up and demanded tighter control over the Israel settlement policy.

The Ambassador to Washington publicly complained in an interview to Reuters that the US were holding the money up.

This could be an indication that the Bush administration is not friendly to Israel.

Israeli anti-war protests

Last Friday (15 February) an anti-war petition signed by 200 people was produced. This called for a ceasefire and said sanctions should be given time to work.

There have been several small anti-war pickets.

There is some debate among those opposed to the war. The Communist Party is against the war but they are also opposed to holding public street demonstrations. They feel the situation is not right because too few people sup-

port it.

I do not think you can speak of an anti-Gulf war movement in Israel at the moment. People who

"People are also very angry with the government about their advice about the Iraqi missile attacks. In fact the Israeli government has not got enough shelters to house all the people."

are good on Palestinian rights also, mostly, support Bush.

However, the feeling of total na-

tional consensus has broken. Part of the reason is the decision to take a member of the the Mdezet Party into the government. Mapam and Ratz do not like this. This party is very racist.

People are also very angry with the government about their advice about the Iraqi missile attacks. In fact the Israeli government has not got enough shelters to house all the people. This is one of the reasons why the government has told people not to go to the shelters but rather to stay in sealed rooms in their apartments.

In fact there is a real dilemma: sealed rooms are the best protection against gas attacks; shelters are best against conventional weapons. All the scud missiles so far have had conventional explosives.

More and more people are ignoring the government and going to the shelters.

107 Euro MPs oppose the war

One hundred and seven Members of the European Parliament have signed an appeal about the war in the Gulf, saying that they "want no part in it", and "solemnly denounce it before the peoples of the world".

66 of the Euro MPs are members of the Socialist Group, and 36 of them Labour.

Their resolution soberly spells out the likely consequences of war:

"The military reduction of Iraq will promote a power struggle between various unsavoury regimes, all highly militarised, to fill the resultant vacuum."

Black people against war

By Assad Rehman

Black People Against War in the Gulf are planning a picket of the Home Office in Queen's Anne Gate, London on Wednesday 20 February to protest against deportation and detentions of Arab people.

We are bringing together various radical black community, trade union and other organisations to oppose the racist backlash in the wake of the Gulf war. We are receiving reports of racist violence from various parts of the country and are planning a bi-weekly bulletin on this issue.

The Newham Monitoring Project Emergency Service has been expanded during the Gulf crisis to help to cope with the increased pressure black people are under.

Black People Against War in the Gulf stands for an end to the current war, withdrawal of imperialist troops from the Gulf and an Arab solution.

Contact us at PO Box 273, London E7.

Affiliations are £1 (individuals) and £10 (organisations).

Gulf round-up

Women opposed to the Gulf war are on a non-stop picket of the Foreign Office, Whitehall, London.

Candlelit vigils are being held every Tuesday and Friday evenings, 5.00-7.00, St Martin's, Trafalgar Sq, London.

Anti-war journals: *Gulf Crisis Weekly*, produced by Milan Rait. £4 for 8 issues from Box G, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1.

War Report from independent journalists. 50 pence weekly from 52 South Park Road, London SW19. Phone 081-543 1569.

Peace News moved to fortnightly. 50 pence from 55 Dawes St, London SE17. Phone 071-252 7937.

Peace Now, produced by an ad-hoc part of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. Free from 87 Kirkstall Road, London SW2 4HE. Phone 081 671 7920.

CND are organising lobbies of MPs. 1.00 briefing in Central Hall, Westminster, before lobbying MPs, Thursday 21 February.

Tuesday 26 February. *Student anti-war lobby of MPs*. More details from Nicola Butler, CND, 162 Holloway Road, London N7. Phone 071 700 2393.

What 'liberating Kuwait' really means

GRAFFITI

bad news: even 29% of *Sun* readers believing it makes a lot of brainwashed chauvinists.

The returning Kuwaiti security forces plan to arrest all Palestinians they can find and impose martial law. Only the Kuwaiti security forces and army will be allowed back into the country at first. They will round up all 'illegal immigrants' still in Kuwait, by which the Kuwaitis mean all Palestinians. In the first three months after the end of hostilities, the United States army will be in control of the whole of newly liberated Kuwait.

What "liberating Kuwait" really means — from the *Independent on Sunday*, 17 February

Money for the Gulf war? Right away, say the Tories! Up to £25 million a day? No problem, declares the Treasury, suddenly generous.

But, according to the *Guardian* (14 February) "The Treasury has postponed the payment of £11 million of emergency food aid to relieve the famine affecting 27 million people in Africa because of the rising costs of the Gulf war and unemployment..."

"The only winners from the war will be the equipment that has proved itself on the terrain, especially in the eyes of Middle East arms buyers".

So speaks a hard-headed capitalist, the London financier Keith Hodgkinson, quoted in the Paris daily *Le Monde*.

Britain is already the second biggest arms seller to Saudi Arabia, and, according to another City man quoted on *Le Monde*, "When the Saudis reward their allies after the conflict, the British will be well placed. Fear of envenoming relations with Jerusalem will handicap the US."

What will young Americans be dying for? US control of the Gulf's oil. What will young British people be dying for? Increased profits for Britain's death merchants.

The Saudis believe that the allies intend to invade southern Iraq on the first day of the land war and they fear that the Western armies will try to stay there afterwards... Baghdad's new rulers will have to be puppets if the West's 'security' is to be assured.

Robert Fisk, *Independent on Sunday*, 17 February

It does look as though the Americans and the allies are out to destroy the entire civil infrastructure of the Iraqi economy.

Denis Healey, *Guardian*, 14 February

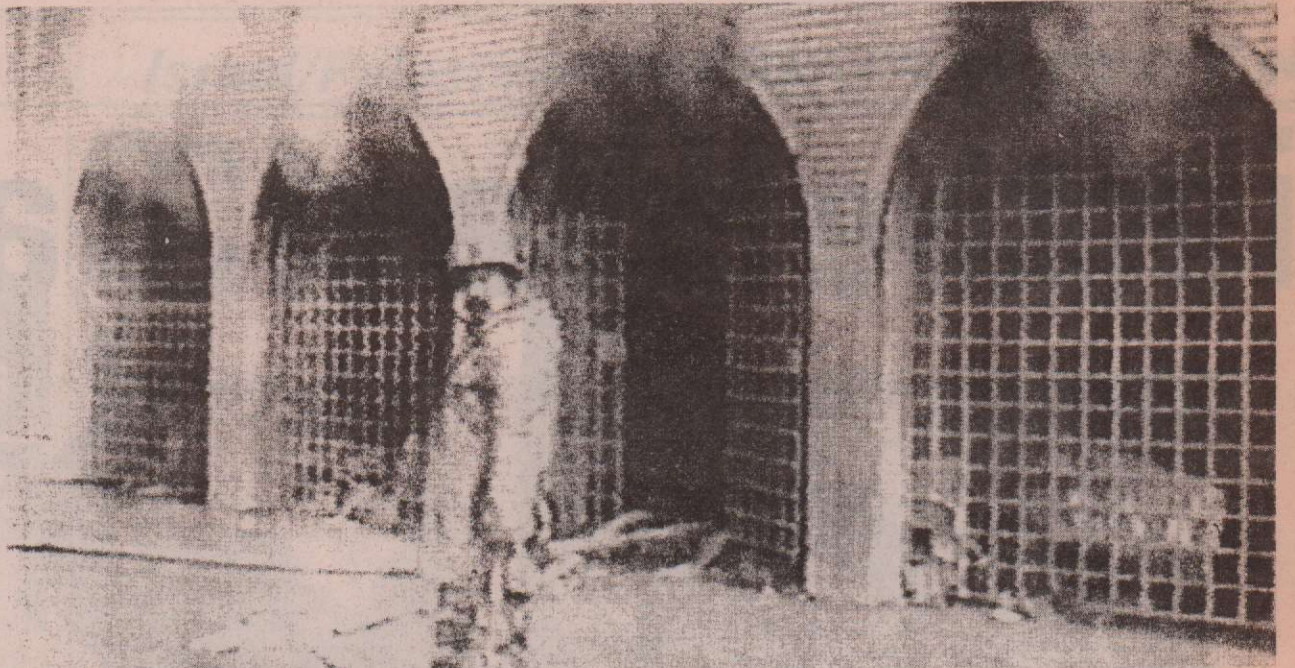
According to all the Western reporters in Baghdad, there was joy on the streets there on 15 February when, briefly, it seemed that Iraq was going to pull out of Kuwait and the war would be over.

Meanwhile, a BBC reporter in Washington, asked for an instant reaction for the noon BBC News, commented that a pull-out would cause difficulties for George Bush because of his "hidden agenda" of crushing Iraq.

Yet some on the left in Britain — *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* for example — remain opposed to Iraq getting out of Kuwait. Why? Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait would help, not hinder, the defence of Iraq's national rights against imperialist attack.

38 per cent of *Daily Star* readers, and 35% of *Sun*, do not trust their papers at all to tell the truth about the Gulf war.

The sceptics greatly outnumber those who believe those papers a lot or even a little — 24% for the *Star* and 29% for the *Sun*. That's the good news. The



The air-raid shelter where hundreds of civilians died

Bunker mentality

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Last Wednesday a US Stealth bomber killed hundreds of civilians in a Baghdad bunker. That much cannot be denied, thanks to the presence of British and American TV crews who filmed the charred remains of women and children being dragged out of the smoking hell-hole.

But not much else about the tragedy is very clear to us ordinary folk.

An Iraqi spokesman immediately denounced the attack as a "well-planned crime" by the Americans. US representatives accused Saddam Hussein of deliberately sacrificing civilians for pro-

paganda advantage. Both sides are equally capable of lying through their teeth, of course.

But the British tabloids had no hesitation in laying the blame: a glance at Thursday's headlines showed a unanimous verdict: "Victims of Saddam's War" (*Daily Mail*); "It was a military bunker" (*Daily Express*); "Sacrificed — Butcher lets 600 die to disgrace the Allies" (*Daily Star*); "10 facts to damn Saddam" (*Sun*).

The *Sun's* "facts" included such incontrovertible evidence as "Cameras on board American jets recorded a precise hit on a positively-identified military target", and "The decision to bomb this target was given after detailed examination of intelligence reports". The *Sun* also revealed the astonishing "fact" that "Saddam is known to be a master of propaganda."

That was about the level of the coverage in the rest of the tabloids as well. The *Mail*, *Express* and *Star* all regurgitated quotes from White House spokesman Marvin Fitzwater ("Saddam Hussein does not share our

view of the sanctity of human life") and Brigadier General Richard Neal ("I'm comfortable with the knowledge that they hit an active military bunker") as though this proved something.

Any doubts as to Saddam's guilt and US innocence was kept for the leader columns, with the *Express* noting sagely that "Alas, even the awesome precision of the Allied bombing cannot guarantee that all escape. This is a price the innocent pay in war." The *Mail* summed things up with the memorable words: "War, however conducted, is hell." How very profound.

One of the few glimmers of light relief to emerge from the war coverage has been the minor row that has blown up following last week's *Sunday Times* attack on the Royal Family for behaving like a bunch of Hooray Henrys (and Henriettas) while the rest of the nation buckles down to the serious business of war.

That well-known puritan Andrew Neil described the Windsors as "parading a mixture of upper-class

decadence and insensitivity which disgusts the public and demeans the monarchy". The Duke of York was accused of playing golf, Lord Linley was criticised for jetting off to Mustique, Philip and Charles incurred Mr Neil's wrath for pheasant shooting. All this, of course, coming on top of the embarrassing business of Charlie Althrop and his cartoonist friend.

While it's good to see the mainstream press having a go at the Royals, one can't help wondering why it should take a war in the Gulf to wake the likes of Andrew Neil up to what a wasteful bunch of layabouts they really are. And one can't help agreeing with the egregious Sir John Junor (in this week's *Mail on Sunday*) that these comments come ill from the editor of the *Sunday Times* "who has never faced anything more dangerous in his life than a cork popping from a champagne bottle in some sleazy West End night club".

But then Junor has never forgiven "Bordes Boy" for backing Heseltine against Mrs Thatcher last year. This feud will run and run.

The international mating game

WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

In Israel "what did you do in the army?" is a common question to ask your partner on your first date.

Presumably if he/she answers "I had a great time in the Lebanon" you can just slap his/her face and walk out!

New Woman magazine has just published an international-type survey full of useless pseudo-facts like the above. The whole thing is loaded with ideology.

For example: abortion is

"legal and easily available to an Israeli woman if pregnancy endangers her health", compared to: in Mozambique abortion is "illegal unless birth poses a threat to the mother's life".

In both countries the law would seem to be abortion is permitted only in cases where continuing the pregnancy would endanger the woman's life. But the use of the words legal/illegal makes Mozambique, a less "developed" country, look much more oppressive.

Another example is the marriage age of Japanese and Swedish women. Apparently a Japanese woman feels left on the shelf if she isn't married by 27, and "almost all" marry by then. 80% of Swedish women marry between the ages of 25 and 30 but "there is no stigma attached to single women".

So in Japan (the eastern country) nearly all women are married by their late 20s because of social stigma, but in Sweden (the western country) nearly all women marry by their late 20s even though there isn't any stigma

attached to being single. Who are they trying to kid?

The survey doesn't seem to notice anything nasty like oppression, although it notes that it is much nicer to live in the "West".

I particularly enjoyed "High fashion is not available off the peg, so most women make their own clothes", and "Orthodox Jewish and Arab women dress more modestly and are less likely to use make-up". The first quotation is from the section on Cuba and could be loosely translated as "There are no decent clothes in the shops so women have to make their own". The second is from the Israeli section and I will leave you to translate it yourself.

The survey, apart from its "Western" bias, sees differences between the way women live as matters of "culture". Perhaps the most blatant example is from the Mozambique section where "a curvaceous body indicates prosperity". It indicates you have enough to eat!

Surveys like this are like the history and geography

taught in my junior school. The idea that all black people in Africa live in mud huts is presented as a matter of "culture", almost of choice. The idea that they might want to live in air-conditioned houses with swimming pools but can't because they are exploited to the point of starvation is not presented.

Similarly, the idea that some of the — bourgeois! — black people are living in air-conditioned houses, in cities, with lots of servants is not mentioned at all. The divisions between women shown up by this and other such surveys are real. Women in rural Africa generally don't have what most western women have. But the divisions are of race and class.

It doesn't matter where you live in the world. If you are rich and of the "right" race, you will have a nice time. Instead of reporting that "inter-racial dating is rare" (in Cuba), *New Woman* should have explained why. The survey would have been a lot more interesting and real.



The Arab world: shape of things to come

A ground war against Iraq could make the Arab 'coalition partners' increasingly jittery. Clive Bradley reports.

During the First World War, an Englishman and a Frenchman held a secret meeting to discuss the post-war division of the Arab world. The Sykes-Picot agreement formed the basis for the partition of the Arab world into British and French 'mandates'. These survived until after the Second World War.

Yet the Arabs had been mobilised on the Anglo-French side against the Germans and the Turks on the promise of a united Arab state. It was a promise that was simply and brutally abandoned.

These are facts that are not forgotten in the Arab world.

The objectives of the Gulf war are no less hazy to the anti-Iraqi Arab partners in the Western coalition than to Western public opinion.

Saddam, they calculate, can't win. He is the wrong horse to back. Those who have backed him, like the PLO, will find, once the dust, sand and blood have settled, that they have no source of income.

Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, for example, has spent too much of the last ten years solid broke. Here is a chance to reverse the fortunes of poverty and indebtedness which have enslaved his country. War means big money.

Here also could be a chance to resolve the Palestinian question, because the US knows that if it is to have its post-Saddam pro-Western alliance, something will have to be done about that.

But — and the Sykes-Picot alarm bells must be ringing in every capital from Rabat to Damascus — the Americans (in the shape of the improbably named Mr Eagleburger) are promising one thing to the Israelis — no peace conference until the next millennium — and, albeit vaguely, another to the Arabs.

And as it becomes more and more a war to obliterate Iraq, it begs other questions.

Arab governments which would be quite happy to see Saddam humiliated or even finished off are not happy at the prospect of a further dismemberment of the broader Arab nation with all that would entail. And they are already facing domestic difficulties.

In Morocco, which had originally supported the war, the largest demonstrations since independence had to be permitted by King Hassan — in support of Iraq. 300,000 people marched through Rabat on 3 February, chanting slogans against the war.

On 25 January a pro-Iraqi general strike was effectively endorsed by the government. Hassan has been forced to stress the 'bilateral' and 'defensive' nature of the 1,200 Moroccan soldiers in the Gulf: they are not to be used in a land war in Iraq.

In Algeria even larger demonstra-



Pro-Saddam demonstration in Tunis

tions, organised by the Islamic fundamentalists, have supported Iraq. The fundamentalists are now demanding training camps to be set up for Algerian volunteers to go and fight for Iraq.

"Of the pro-Western alliance, it is especially Syria that would face problems if Israel retaliated for Scud attacks."

In Egypt, perhaps the most stable pro-Western country, there have been no pro-Iraqi demonstrations, but there are calls for one from opposition parties. The semi-official *Al-Ahram* daily newspaper has given column space, since the bombing of the civilian shelter in Baghdad, to a left-wing journalist condemning the Allied war effort.

Mubarak no doubt takes seriously fundamentalist threats. He knows that his fate could be that of his predecessor, Anwar Sadat, who was assassinated by them in 1981.

Egypt depended very heavily on remittances from its workers in the Gulf to buoy up its seriously flailing economy. These have now nearly dried up. The financial loss, according to Prime Minister Atif Sidqi, is a staggering \$31 billion.

But, as Mubarak hoped, the foreign aid has been pouring into Egypt at a colossal rate. Its creditors, like Saudi Arabia and the USA, have written off large

amounts of its debt: a third already. The G7 group of industrial nations are now proposing to write off a third more. The IMF has eased its terms for debt repayment.

An Egyptian economist, in reference to this unexpected windfall, has suggested the erection of a statue in honour of Saddam Hussein.

Tougher problems face Syria and Jordan, which border Iraq could be much more directly involved. President Asad of Syria, long a bitter enemy of the rival Iraqi Ba'athists, has risked

domestic unpopularity by teaming up with the US, behind which is seen to lurk the hated Israel. The post-war order would probably centre around an Egypt-Syria-Saudi Arabia axis (not new, in twentieth century Arab history, although Asad must hope that he would be more central to it than previously.)

Of the pro-Western alliance, it is especially Syria that would face problems if Israel retaliated for Scud attacks. Israel still occupies the Golan Heights, a part of Syria it seized in 1967. And Asad has an unquantifiable Islamic opposition: in 1983 he had to lay siege to an entire city to crush a fundamentalist

Australian left confused

Tony Brown reports on the anti-war movement in Sydney

About 7,000 attended a demonstration in Sydney against the Gulf war on Sunday 10 February.

It was a very quiet demo, the main emphasis of rally organisers, Network for Peace, is "No war, sanctions weren't given a chance, men are warmongers". As distinct from this, there is the "hard left", which is really quite confused.

IS (in Britain the SWP) were the loudest contingent. They call for US out, shout "Remember Vietnam" and generally bemoan the failure of the Arabs to combine and fight the real enemy.

DSP (who now have produced the first issue of *Green Left*) were pretty

small and had the one banner: "No blood for oil".

Militant are calling for sanctions to be imposed. The ex-Healyites are jubilant that Israel has been bombed. They have joined the Morenists.

There are still very few unions active. At the Cockatoo Island dockyards the metalworkers union has got a motion through exempting all naval ships from industrial action. At the same time some of their officers are speaking at the demos. When questioned one replied: "It's a contradiction we have to live with".

There aren't many "ordinary" people on the streets at the moment. The anti-war movement is dominated by left groups, students. This is very different to the Vietnam rallies.

There is growing disquiet in the Australian Labor Party. A "Labor for Peace in the Middle East" group has been established. But the ALP has been so disabled that there's no one left to join such groups. It is made up of parliamentarians and union officials.

revolt, and did so with a barbarity that would have made his current enemy in Baghdad shed one or two tears of pride.

For King Hussein of Jordan, the Gulf war has been a political nightmare. Hussein has for decades been the West's Mr Nice Guy, the Arab moderate par excellence, proud of his British education and sleeve-displayed Western sympathies.

Hussein's problem is the enormous number of Palestinians who live in his country, about 60 per cent of the population. Like their families across the river Jordan they are forthright in their support of Iraq. Hussein's pro-Iraqi stand on the war has hugely increased his popularity — always in doubt since he massacred thousands of Palestinian guerrillas in September 1970.

But the Gulf crisis has been an economic disaster for Jordan. Losses for the last five months of 1990 have been estimated at \$1 billion, and could rise to \$4 billion for 1991 — half the country's GNP.

"Agricultural exports", notes the *Middle East* magazine (Feb 1991) "95% of which were geared for the Gulf market, have been almost totally paralysed". Tourism has dried up; Arab aid, especially from Saudi Arabia, has stopped completely.

In addition, Jordan is having to cope with the flood of refugees arriving from Iraq. The government spent \$55 million on the 850,000 evacuees from Iraq who arrived before last October alone. And the international community has done little to reduce the bill.

Jordan has the further geographical problem of bordering Iraq on one side and Israel on the other. If Israel does join the war, it will probably use Jordanian airspace to do so. Jordan has said it will resist any such violation, meaning it will be caught up in a war with Israel it is in no military position to fight.

So far the only Arab government which has seriously cracked, effectively breaking from the coalition, is Morocco's. But the sands are shifting under the pro-Western regimes. A major land war will tear the Arab world apart. Asad and Mubarak have proven themselves to be political survivors, but their futures could not be guaranteed by Western governments already so heavily committed in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

The post-war Arab order looked good, from Washington and London's viewpoint, on paper.

If they could bolster Egypt and Syria especially, they could begin seriously to reduce their support for Israel (particularly an American consideration: the White House finds it embarrassing to be permanently vetoing UN resolutions against Israel), and perhaps, in so far as they really care about it, move forward on the Palestine question.

The reality may be quite different. Instead of a new, stabilised field for their investments and manufactured goods (and guns: stability has never meant arms reductions, at least not in this part of the world), they could face huge nationalist oppositions, toppling the pro-Western governments which already exist.

Algeria at the moment looks the most likely candidate for a fundamentalist coup.

What could happen then is anyone's guess.

The fire last time

By Ruth Cockroft

The spectre of the Vietnam War is haunting Washington. The fear of internal division and the unleashing of huge anti-war struggles is haunting the USA, once again at war.

The Vietnam War was the greatest evil for a whole generation of American youth. In an attempt to prevent the unification of South and North Vietnam under Stalinist control, the Americans launched a brutal and crushing war. They subjected North Vietnam to massive aerial bombardment and forcibly removed millions of Vietnamese civilians to concentration camps.

The Americans used toxic weapons such as napalm, and defoliated whole jungles by spraying them with "Agent Orange", which poisoned crops and people. People are still dying from its effects, and generating deformed children because of it. The Americans committed acts of the most appalling brutality, such as the massacre of unarmed villages. The massacre at My Lai is the best documented example.

President Lyndon Johnson administered this death and destruction, and his words then have been parroted today by Bush. Bush too fears being judged "a coward, an unmanly man. A man without a spine...a traitor, a weakling."

The label murderer is perhaps a more precise description of what Johnson was. That is what millions of Americans came to think Johnson and his successor, Nixon, were. They made that label stick by building a broad anti-war movement that could not be ignored.

That is what we must do to the mass murderers Bush and his stooge, Prime Minister John Major. We must build a mass anti-war movement.

But, as Marxists, our task is even greater: we must seize the opportunity offered to the left by anti-war radicalisation and transform it — or much of it — into a revolutionary anti-capitalist offensive at home.

The Vietnam War is instructive on this. The politics of that anti-war movement

deserve our attention.

The Vietnam War shook up the whole of Western society and created an unprecedented international anti-war movement of great strength. At first demonstrations were small, the protests a vociferous minority, but as war dragged on and the senseless killing continued the movement grew in scale and developed politically.

Eventually the anti-war protests began to overflow into the rest of society, affecting other social issues.

The rebellion against the war had begun with students in America faced with conscription into fighting "Johnson's war". National protests were organised from the beginning by groups such as Students for a Democratic Society.

But it was not only America where the student population organised against the war. There was street fighting in Japan against the

Stalinist Poland.

Bubbling beneath these protests of — on the whole — a middle class privileged group of young people, there were even greater antagonisms contained and straitjacketed for decades. War and the radical student response brought these issues explicitly to the surface.

1968 saw the radicalisation of other, and independent streams of revolt and protest converging with the anti-war movement — for example, the movement for black civil rights and against America's own "apartheid system", a movement which had been gathering strength and militancy since the mid-'50s.

In addition, the modern feminist movement was born in the spirit of equal rights for all people. And in May 1968 there was the largest general strike in the history of our movement in France, detonated by student action.

The war focused a mass movement of idealistic youth fighting for liberation politics, and bearing great hopes for a different world. The campaigns that emerged from the Vietnam syndrome saw themselves as libertarian and anti-establishment on a world-wide scale.

The American black civil rights movement was a rebellion against America's deep and ingrained racist attitudes and institutions. Martin Luther King attempted to channel the alienation of black people living in American ghettos into a huge movement of non-violent disobedience.

In 1965, '66, '67 and '68 the people of the black ghettos all across America erupted in large-scale rebellions which left many dead. It was an immense modern slave revolt in the very heart of capitalism. Great fires gutted the heart of some of the most prosperous cities of the most prosperous country on earth.

New radical black leaders emerged, like the Black Panthers, who took on the racist terror-mongering US cops and defended the ghettos, gun in hand.

As the Vietnam War dragged on, King's stand became more radical. He drew out the links between war and poverty. Motivated by

"King's campaign used the glaring inequality of the black/white death ratios in Vietnam to illustrate the terrible latter-day social cannibalism with which American capitalist society treated its black people."

American use of Japanese military bases, a famous student occupation at the LSE in London, and student protests in Italy, Spain and France.

In turn, the example of students acting against the war inspired students all over the world into political activism — and not only about Vietnam. 1968 saw a strong surge of anti-establishment student protest in neo-



Christianity, King was nevertheless a committed fighter for social justice and he launched the poor people's campaign against poverty. King's campaign was a universal campaign against poverty and for equal rights for all people. It used the glaring inequality of the black/white death ratios in Vietnam to illustrate the terrible latter-day social cannibalism with which American capitalist society treated its black people.

As the world-wide movement with Vietnam as its focus grew and developed it absorbed other currents, and not only from the black movement in the USA.

The modern feminist movement was born in the spirit of equal rights for all people. The left itself was deeply ingrained with male chauvinist and sexist ideas; sexual liberation — the great slogan of the '60s — was itself sometimes a cloak for the traditional abuse by men of women within relationships. Women fought hard against the sexism of the left and for their own equal place inside the movement. Women considered themselves to



May 1968, Paris

Vietnam war movement



Anti-war protester taunts military police outside the Pentagon

be part of the general movement for liberation, part of an "all people's movement" for equality and the end of oppression. Socialist feminism chimed with these times of mass mobilisation and radical protest.

The high point of this great spreading flood tide of rebellion came in May 1968, with the giant general strike of nine million workers in France.

Students confronted the French government in protest against cuts, and against the decrepit state of French education. Inspired by Vietnam they built barricades and took on the notoriously violent head-cracking and gun wielding special police, the CRS. Big battles took place on the 'Night of the Barricades', May 10th. The students occupied the Sorbonne.

Suddenly the French working class followed the lead of the students: all across France, ignoring the official Stalinist labour movement leaders, they occupied the factories!

Despite the official unions' attempts to contain the strikes and limit demands, the strikes quickly generated a political threat to the state. Workers' defence was widely organised, democratic structures governed the organisation of occupations and democratic committees of students and workers organised the distribution of food.

Meetings demanded a minimum wage, a pension at 60, a forty-hour week, payment for the strike period, and ended with the singing of the Internationale.

More ominous for the French ruling class was the refusal by many workers to demand anything at all! Workers occupying a Citroen factory defied management pleas to come up with some demands; instead management were left with silence for some days. Plainly, the workers wanted more than a better deal with the bosses.

The then immensely powerful French Communist Party strove to undermine the strike: "the nine million strikers do not seek power, they want better conditions of work", said a PCF official. The French "Communist" trade unions refused to harness the power of the strikes to political demands and positively encouraged workers

to return to work with improved conditions and pay. But time and again workers' demands transcended the attempts of the PCF to try and contain the struggle.

The PCF succeeded in gradually driving strikers back to work. A general election resulted in the strengthening of the French right wing and its continued dominance over French society for the next 13 years. Thus it was a deliberately provoked defeat of the French working class, consciously organised by a PCF frightened of revolution.

France demonstrated the great world-shaking power of the working class when it chooses to act. It showed that, in certain conditions, radical students could inspire and help ignite working class action. Unfortunately, the experience of the general strike also demonstrated the power of the entrenched capitalist class and their "socialist" and Stalinist allies to derail and hold back the working class.

The huge contradictions gaping in the politics of the anti-war movement opened it to additional political weaknesses: it inverted the nationalism of its own side, uncritically accepting the nationalism of the others, marching under the flag of the Vietnamese Stalinist "National Liberation Front". The destructive tendencies of American imperialism towards the Third World led to the politics of a kind of knee-jerk reaction, and a glorification of leaders who championed Third World causes.

The chant of "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh" was the chant of radical students all over the Western world. [There was a "Trotskyist" version: "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh — how many Trots did you do in?" Trotskyists like the supporters of Ernest Mandel wouldn't chant this version, on principle!]

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara caught the romantic imaginations of the young articulate middle class students who were looking for progressive causes, and found them in the glorification of Cuba. There was a growth in Maoism and a championing of the monstrous ultra-Stalinist Chinese Cultural Revolution.

In reality, of course, the Cultural Revolu-

tion was a philistine step by the ruling Chinese Stalinists devised to liquidate opposition, the teaching of a single text with a hatred of "intellectuals" leading to thousands of deaths and heralding the lunatic genocidal ideology of the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge merely did things more comprehensively and intensely and all in one go.

Inevitably the "1968 tide" began to recede. There was a retreat from the politics of universal equality both within the feminist and the black movements. King's assassination led to a hardening of attitudes.

Feminism increasingly put gender rather than class at the centre of oppression. These were the politics of a kind of despair and frustration at the lack of change.

The politics of the new left were in reality only one step away from conforming with the ruling ideology of society. Changing the world was seen only as an incidental and, faced with difficulties became for some increas-

ingly an unnecessary part of the search for self-realisation.

The counter-culture was about finding a "true knowledge of self" and as such eventually gave way to the "me generation", and later collapsed into the tame reformist politics of equal opportunities, ecology and moralism about Third World struggles.

Furthermore, those who had embraced Stalinism had strangled the notion of socialism as self-emancipation and replaced it with the idealisation of a monstrous, repressive state tyranny. The idealisation of Cuba, China, Cambodia and Vietnam did nothing but demoralise and disenchant: the movement had erected false gods.

Much of the present and recent public disillusionment of ex-revolutionaries and ex-socialists is a movement by these very people, grown old and tired and now disenchanted. But there was never any respect-worthy intellectual, political or moral reason for them to subscribe to these illusions in the first place!

In any case it is not liberating working class socialism they have become disillusioned with: most of them rejected that at the start!

At the centre of much of the new left's politics was what was regarded as the revolutionary potential of lifestyle politics. A powerful counter-culture of drugs, permissiveness and hedonism were strictly in vogue. On one hand the left was dogmatic, doctrinaire and Stalinist, whilst on the other it shunned working class socialism and chose instead a self-indulgent, individualistic and sometimes nihilistic culture.

At the end of 1968, despite huge demonstrations against the American offensive on Vietnam, over 30,000 American troops had died, and countless more Vietnamese; mainstream careerist US "liberal" Bobby Kennedy, and Martin Luther King had been assassinated; in Britain Tory MP Enoch Powell had made his racist "Rivers of Blood" speech; in Northern Ireland Catholics were in rebellion; Soviet tanks had invaded Czechoslovakia and ten million French workers had staged the biggest strike ever in history. Society was in ferment, yet the politics of the movement had been successfully neutered and hollowed out.

The Stalinist and "socialist" official organisations of the labour movement had helped the capitalists to survive.

History, it is said, never repeats itself exactly, but even so lessons should be learned. Our role as the Gulf war's impact increases polarisation in society is to assert working class politics forcefully.

Already the American labour movement is moving to take centre stage in opposition to the war. Our central task is to build a powerful anti-war movement. But we have other tasks, too. We must ensure that radicalised people do not become miseducated with the nationalism of the Ba'athists, the utopianism of Third World ideologies, or the moralistic anti-consumption politics of the Greens.

Those who can learn the lessons of history can hope to avoid reliving it!



"Women fought hard for their equal place in the movement"

Neal Ascherson: "we have to choose between greater and lesser evils"

The poverty of liberalism

THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Patrick Murphy



"A world which cannot stand up to a tyrant like Saddam Hussein will soon become uninhabitable. The costs of fighting him are very great; a brutal and indiscriminate war whose bill in blood will be paid mostly by civilians and helpless conscripts; a probably botched 'settlement' afterwards which will try to impose a new Western hegemony over the Middle East and which will leave Israel as the unchallenged regional superpower. Yet even these things are less terrible than leaving intact Saddam's conquests and power to conquer." So says Neal Ascherson in the *Independent on Sunday*.

Neal Ascherson illustrates a point. Most 'liberal intelligentsia' support war in the Gulf.

Despite the 'agonies' of self-doubt liberal commentators insist on putting themselves and the rest of us through, they are the inheritors of a less than proud tradition. Good, internationalist, democratic commentators in peacetime have, with monotonous regularity and predictability, supported wars 'once they have started' (always the time when opposition is most difficult, takes most courage and would make most difference).

It is only polite to agonise and show customary reluctance in public first. The vic-



"We have to mobilise all opposition to the war and try and turn it into a force that shakes the power structures that cause wars."

tims of such wars, short and long-term, remain sadly oblivious to the reluctance of some of the warmongers.

Ascherson, however, is an example of a sadder fact which the left should register. As a left-wing Scottish nationalist he has a

strong record as critic of British national chauvinism, the hypocrisy at the heart of parliamentary government and imperialist pretensions. Despite the strength of that current in Scottish socialism he has been an inveterate opponent of Stalinism and a champion of national rights in Eastern Europe long before it became fashionable.

His support for the Gulf war is not so predictable but his logic corroborates that of many on the Labour 'soft left'. The quote above is startling because it is clear that he appreciates the likely outcome and yet still supports the war.

The core of his argument is firstly that there is simply no alternative and, secondly, that Saddam's growing power and conquests are a greater evil than (presumably) Western imperialist domination, Israeli regional supremacy and the horrors of war. "Even revolutionaries", he mourns, "have to choose between greater and lesser evils and contemplate alliances with power structures they hope ultimately to overthrow".

Liberals have got the issue of the war all wrong with, as far as I can see, no excuse. There is little that is unique about this war and no-one has attempted to define with determination the comparison with Hitler. (Ascherson, again uncharacteristically, simply asserts it and makes no attempt even to explain why Saddam is obviously a greater danger than imperialism).

Fundamentally, however, they are paralysed by the limits of their own politics. Liberals are, and have always been, critics of their own rulers, commentators on the excesses of capitalism, observers of, rather than participants in, great struggles. The idea of their being a serious alternative to capitalism, a different way to organise relations between peoples (within as well as between nations) is simply not on their agenda. The only choice is between *existing* ruling classes, there can be no other — that is the basic conservatism at the heart of liberalism.

Wars waged by imperialist powers can be opposed when there is something in the enemy to support or encourage; the Vietnamese should govern themselves, the Egyptians should control their own Suez Canal, etc.

There is nothing to support in Saddam Hussein. The choice in the real world, the only world, is no choice. Saddam is a brutal dictator, the West plan regional domination — where is there for a liberal to hide? Most are hiding in the same bunker — built on lesser evils and realpolitik. The coalition are at least democratic (not true of most of its members), Iraq started the conflict with an aggressive act, the UN endorsed the action — hence war is just...but only just!

There is, perhaps, no alternative if your highest aim is to critically advise capitalism how to rule more wisely, humanely, democratically. There is an alternative only if our aim is to mobilise the variously-inspired opposition to war and try to turn it into a force that shakes the power structures that cause wars.

It matters very much, however, who defeats Saddam and who rules the roost after the war. The European order after fascism could have been settled by working-class, democratic forces had revolutions against the right proceeded differently in Spain and France in particular. As it was, US capitalism and Stalinism carved up the continent and from there shaped much of the post-war world. The forces for a democratic working-class social order were there, but they needed political ideas, answers to great questions of tactics and principles, and, above all, their political independence to act in their own right.

This is the indispensable armoury of a force with no great weapons of destruction, defined by its lack of control over wealth and power. To write this force out of events, or to insist on tying it to existing ruling classes, especially when great wars occur between rival gangsters, is to doom humanity to a cycle of such wars and such hopeless choices.

Fact: passive smoking makes you ill

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

Hard on the heels of evidence that passive smoking causes much more illness than was originally thought comes a landmark legal ruling in Australia.

For the first time in the world, it seems, a court has declared that exposure to cigarette smoke leads to certain diseases.

The case started five years ago when the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations (AFCO) took exception to a newspaper advertisement from the Tobacco Institute of Australia (TIA). Court pro-

ceedings lasted 2½ years. The ad, appearing in 14 newspapers, claimed there was "little evidence and nothing which proves scientifically that cigarette smoke causes disease in non-smokers".

Despite complaints by AFCO, this wording was not changed and so they began proceedings under the Trade Practices Act.

AFCO tabled over 300 reports, chiefly those on the effects of passive smoking published by the US Surgeon General, the US National Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia and the Froggatt inquiry into health and smoking in Britain.

TIA witnesses question the design and methods of some of the reports and asked whether "statistical significance" of data from epidemiological studies could be equated with legal proof.

This has been a problem before in legal cases. Briefly, the question is whether, if a survey shows that, for instance, children of smokers are more prone to suffer from asthma, it can be said that passive smoking causes asthma. It is perhaps even more difficult to say whether a particular case of asthma has been caused by passive smoking. Clearly, asthma occurs in the absence of smoking.

This line of argument is an old one, and not only for the tobacco industry. Epidemiological studies have

shown a link between lung cancer and smoking. Is it the case, as the tobacco lobby used to say, that this was a coincidence or that people prone to get lung cancer for some reason liked to smoke!

This is not as ridiculous as it seems. People working in dusty, polluting jobs tended to smoke more heavily, perhaps for relief from stress, or for "cultural reasons". More exact studies, allowing for such factors, provided the evidence that lung cancer and many other ailments were far higher in *all* groups of smokers than in similar groups of non-smokers.

Thus the TIA were on shaky ground, particularly since it would be difficult to argue that people chose to be passive smokers.

The judge, Trevor Morling, agreed with cancer expert Professor Sir Richard Doll from the University of Oxford that statistical significance was a guide. Lack of it was a sign for caution, rather than an indication of disproof.

Passive smoking studies are full of problems such as the difficulty in establishing how much smoke had been inhaled on the subjects/victims. However, Morling agreed that the overall pattern emerging from such studies was clear.

His conclusions were as follows:

- There is "overwhelming evidence" that passive smoking triggers asthma attacks and diseases of the respiratory tract in children.

- There is "compelling scientific evidence" that cigarette smoke causes lung cancer in non-smokers.

- There is "more than a little evidence" that other people's smoke causes "glue ear" in children, a condition that can cause deafness if not detected and treated early enough.

- The statement by the TIA was likely to mislead smokers and non-smokers on the effects of smoking.

He granted an injunction against repetition of the advert.

Morling did not comment on the evidence that passive smoking can endanger a foetus. If he had, the ruling would be subject to the legal challenge that foetuses cannot read and would therefore not be misled by a newspaper advert!

The ruling could make it much more difficult for employers, restaurateurs, pub owners and others to avoid legal action if they allow their employees or customers to be exposed to other people's smoke.

Ten years on (and on)

It doesn't seem possible, does it? An article about science, health or the environment in nearly every issue of *SO* for the last decade, covering anything from outer space to nuclear physics, lung cancer to wind power. If you have enjoyed or learnt anything from these, perhaps you might send a bit extra to *SO's* latest fund-raising scheme.



Clause 28: a militant campaign with links to the labour movement

Lesbian and gay liberation: militant campaign needed

WRITEBACK

Clive Bradley's article on the relationship between lesbians and gays and the left seriously understates some key themes (SO 475).

Firstly, the impact of Stalinism on the question is still very much with us. Not only are there some on the left who still think that homosexuality is a "bourgeois deviation", there are plenty of lesbians and gays who still think that this is what the left thinks.

Who can blame them when both the *Morning Star* and *Militant* have only discovered lesbians and gays in the last couple of years and even then with considerable reluctance.

The lesbian and gay scene, the pink economy, may well be smaller here than elsewhere. But thanks to the activities of socialists the links, both with the left and with trade unionism are

perhaps stronger.

The groups formed around the miners, printers and ambulance crews' disputes showed an awareness that for lesbian and gay liberation to be achieved a link with working class struggle is essential.

The downside, however, has been the countervailing tendency to drop talk of liberation and concentrate instead on "rights". Many of the best activists in the lesbian and gay movement over the past 20 years have been drawn into the Labour Party. Some have become councillors and a few MPs.

Some progress has been made at least in respect of paper policy. But in terms of real change for the better the majority of lesbians and gays have noticed little difference. Rather energy which might have been directed to building a stronger lesbian and gay movement has been frittered away in the committee rooms.

The encouraging thing about the campaigns against Clause 28 and now Clause 25/Paragraph 16 is that they are militant campaigns which do

understand that the closer the links with the trade unions the better the chances of longer term strength. Ken Livingstone got the biggest cheer on the demo of February 16th. But many of those cheering know that Neil Kinnock won't be wearing his

heart on his sleeve on this issue.

They will be looking to their union branches and workplaces to lead the fight against the bigots.

Ernie Jones
North London

Trade unionists fight war

The position of my union branch, Northampton UF 214 UCATT, of which I am secretary, on the Gulf war and the TUC is in the following resolution which was passed at the last branch meeting:

"Realising that no country or countries can realise the democratic right to self determination, while another country or other countries is/are in military occupation of a country or other countries.

"We call on the TUC general council to support the

call for a ceasefire in the Gulf war and for the removal of Allied troops from the Persian Gulf, Iraqi troops from Kuwait, and Israeli troops from the Occupied Territories."

I feel that a 'Trade Unionists Against the War' campaign is desperately needed politically and industrially. I would certainly be prepared to work towards and with such a campaign, both in my locality and more nationally.

Brian Higgins,
Secretary, Building Worker Group
Northampton

Just let your brain go limp

Alan Gilbert pretends a vast knowledge of Agatha Christie, while at the same time claiming not to know much of the stories.

For example, Gilbert attributes Montague Egg to Christie. In fact this character belongs to Dorothy L Sayers. He obviously does not know that Poirot is an oddity among Belgians as well as the English. If he thinks Agatha Christie's plots all have "pace and cleverness" may I refer him to the adventures of Penny and Tuppence?

With regard to David Suchet — he is shorter in height than Hastings and Japp. He wears perfume, spats, is afraid of fast driving and has a mincing walk — "a rather imposing figure"?

My point about Poirot being an exception to the other telly detectives is this: Poirot has no pretensions to be other than what it is — entertainment. There are no searches for hidden meanings, or the grotty underside of high life.

The plots are almost uniformly crap, the characters are a development of Christie's. By this I mean that for once the telly has

done what it should do — add an extra dimension. The viewer can see Poirot's mincing walk, Hastings' rugged good looks.

Poirot's love of modern design is revealed in 26 inch technicolour to be a love of polished hardwood, glass bricks and art deco facades. Yum, yum.

By contrast, Morse the tel-

ly programme detracts from Morse the Colin Dexter novel by giving us a pastiche of angst, a symbolic representation of sexual repression. Morse the telly programme does not add to our knowledge or our enjoyment.

Agatha Christie usually takes 250 pages to develop and conclude the plot of one of the Poirot stories. The tel-

ly naturally has to reduce the intricacy, and cut out all but the 'essentials'. Not surprisingly the plots lose a lot in translation.

Alan Gilbert should stop trying to be clever about trashy detective fiction and take my advice: let your brain go limp and read the books!

BJ Siddon
South London

In defence of Twin Peaks

Lilian Thompson's review of *Twin Peaks* takes a simplistic view of a complex piece of work, distorts facts to better illustrate her thesis and falls into the old trap of confusing depiction with approval and characters' words with author's message.

Lynch is essentially a surrealist, therefore he is concerned to work out his subconscious fears and desires regarding many things including women, violence, men, etc. One view of *Twin Peaks* might see Agent Cooper as Lynch's conscious mind trying to make sense of the murky forest of his sub-

conscious and Laura Palmer as just another aspect of Lynch's own personality.

Art is concerned with exploring people's motivations as they are, not as "right-on" reviewers might wish them to be. It's not acceptable to criticise Lynch because Laura feels "badness" and self-loathing — the only question you can legitimately ask is "is this character psychologically consistent?". Things like masochism, sadism and self-destructiveness are hardly uncommon; I'd venture to suggest they should be dealt with rather than swept under the carpet. I'm sure even Lilian Thompson has repressed desires she might not want to admit to.

"Evil" in *Twin Peaks* is dealt with in a very am-

biguous way, shown as having a strong attraction for both male and female characters. The whole series is full of shades of grey and the good characters are as often subjects of mockery as of approval. Even reading the work at a superficial level, the wife-beater Leo Johnson has met a grim end as Laura.

Finally, I think it's a big mistake to prejudge the series before it ends. I suspect there are surprises in store and the "good guys" may prove less virtuous than they might appear. Nothing in *Twin Peaks* is to be taken at face value. The owls are not what they seem, and neither is anything else.

James Shelley
Streatham

Unfair to Saddam?

Matt Cooper accuses me (Letters, SO474) of echoing "the media assault on Saddam as an eco-terrorist" in my article, "The Gulf War: the Environmental Threat".

My article is further accused of "like the media generally, communicat[ing] as much by which (sic) it omits as by what it includes". Unfortunately, Matt has completely failed to realise that the article was about one particular environmental threat, namely the danger that would ensue if Saddam's retreating army were to set fire to the Kuwaiti oil wells. It may be that he only read the headline which *did* give a misleading impression. My chosen title was "Keep the Oil Fires Burning..."

The article relies extensively on the theories of leading CND member Dr John Cox and of the climatologists who originated the theory of the "nuclear winter". None of these can be said to echo the aforesaid media assault.

Nor are these theories scaremongering. My article is careful to dismiss the more doomsday scenarios of King Hussein and the Green Party while pointing out that Met Office studies bear out the predictions of climatic dislocations affecting agriculture in the Indian subcontinent. The British government is funding research into how Indian farmers could respond to this danger.

As far as the TV coverage of the oiling of sea birds in the Gulf is concerned, I don't see how we in *SO* can do much more than we already have, which is to point out that the birds shown were not the victims of deliberate pollution (though such victims there surely will be) and to criticise TV for ignoring the human casualties of the bombing.

Irrational about 'Zionism'

I was interested to read Liam Conway's article in last week's *SO*.

The SWP's attitude to "Zionists" is becoming increasingly irrational. At the recent student anti-war conference in Sheffield they made the right of Israel to exist the central plank of their intervention.

And, as Max Gordon reported in *SO*, the term "Zionist" has become a ritual abusive aside to *SO* supporters.

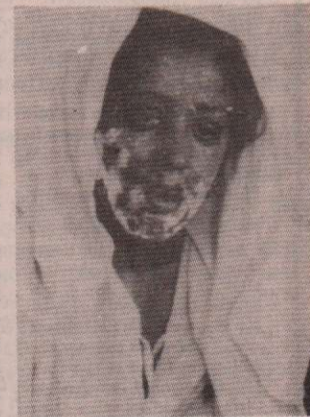
It is an hysterical and essentially apolitical response to a tragically complex national dispute. For some time the SWP have refused to involve themselves in campaigns or initiatives which include "Zionists". This was the reason given in the refusal to debate Iranian socialists who felt the SWP's support

This was done prominently next to my article as well as elsewhere.

It is true that I did not mention the bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactors or indeed of its chemical weapons plants. The article was about one thing only, the consequences of oil well fires. As readers of my column will know, I have written extensively on pollution around nuclear plants, whether through "normal operation" or during accidents, and have also written on chemical weapons and their effects. As soon as I get any information on the bombing of these plants, I will certainly relay it to *SO* readers but I would rather not indulge in speculation.

Incidentally, I note Matt's assertion that to bomb nuclear and chemical weapon plants would be a war crime if dangerous material were released to the detriment of the civilian population. I have no evidence that this has occurred and neither, I imagine, has Matt. I wonder, if I were to suggest it might be some sort of crime to build chemical weapons plants, I might be accused of echoing the media assault on Saddam.

Les Hearn
Croydon



Victim of a chemical bomb attack during Iran-Iraq war. Les Hearn: "I have written extensively on the effects of chemical weapons."

for Iran towards the end of the Iran-Iraq war was a political collapse.

But they are hypocrites, too. The lines are redrawn when it suits the factional ends of the SWP. For instance, the invitations to Tony Benn (who supports the right of Israel to exist) to speak and participate in SWP events are not inhibited by his "Zionism".

It is not a peripheral issue either. The (just) hostility to the Israeli government will gather momentum as the war develops. This hostility can easily develop into an hostility to the Jewish nation and to Jews as a whole.

If it does the "anti-Zionists" of groups such as the SWP will share some of blame.

Paul McGarry
South London



Nationalist demonstration in Moldova

First of three articles by Stan Crooke

The break-up of the Soviet Union

In March this year a referendum is due to be held in the Soviet Union on the future of the Soviet state. Against a background of rising nationalist conflict, the ballot paper in the referendum will ask the question: "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renovated federation of equal sovereign republics, with the rights and liberties of individuals of all nationalities fully guaranteed?"

Whether the hundred million roubles which the referendum will cost will prove to be money well spent is open to debate: the fifteen republics which make up the Soviet Union are already voting with their feet. By the close of 1990 all Soviet republics (with the exception of Kirghizia) had adopted declarations of sovereignty or independence. Many of the republics now regard themselves as in a "transitional period" to complete independence.

The three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), two of the three republics in the Transcaucasus (Armenia and Georgia), and the Western border republic of Moldova (formerly called Moldavia) are the republics most advanced along the road of secession.

Other republics are heading in the same direction, even if they are not as far advanced. In October 1990, for example, the Ukrainian and Russian republics declared that central Soviet legislation would have no force on their territories unless ratified by their own parliaments. And even the normally quiescent Kirghiz republic has announced that it is dropping the word "socialist" from its official title of "Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic".

As the tendencies towards secession and heightened national conflict have gained in strength, the more conservative wing of the Stalinist apparatus has become increasingly outspoken in its calls for a crackdown and the restoration of old-style "law and order".

Speaking on Soviet television last December, Vladimir Kryuchkov warned: "The threat of the Soviet Union's collapse has emerged, a national chauvinism is being fuelled, and mass disorder and violence are being provoked. Today the question is: will our great state exist or not? There is no doubt that every reasonable honest Soviet citizen will answer yes."

Just in case there were any honest Soviet citizens around who thought otherwise, less

than a month after Kryuchkov's televised broadcast Soviet troops moved into action in the Baltic republics.

The traditionally Moscow-loyal Communist Parties (CPs) in the different republics are either unable or unwilling to stem the secessionist tide. In six republics the CPs are now the opposition parties in the local parliaments: Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, and the three Baltic states.

In the case of Georgia and a number of other republics, the CPs have allied themselves with the local nationalist parties. The Georgian CP advocates "the establishment of Georgia's full state independence", Georgian membership of the United Nations, and the establishment of Georgian police and national security forces, whilst the Ukrainian CP has likewise espoused the nationalist cause and backed the creation of the republic's own armed forces.

But the clash between the different republics and the Soviet central government and the breaking away of the former from

"Such examples show the futility of attempting to divide the world into bad nations and good nations."

the latter is only one aspect of the "national question" (in reality: a whole series of national questions) in the Soviet Union. Within the separate republics themselves there are a whole number of unresolved national questions, many of which have led to bloody ethnic clashes in recent years.

Few of the republics show any degree of uniformity in terms of the national composition of their populations. For example: 36% of the population in Kazakhstan are Kazakhs, 41% are Russians; 48% of the population in Kirghizia are Kirghiz, 26% are Russians, and 12% are Uzbeks; 54% of the population in Latvia are Latvian, 33% are Russian; 64% of the population in Moldova are Moldovan, 14% are Ukrainian, 13% are Russian and 4% are Gagauz Turks.

Even apart from the 20 million Russians who live in various republics outside of the Russian republic itself, there are compact national minorities in different republics throughout the Soviet Union: Abkhazians and South Ossetians in Georgia, Tatars and Bashkiri in the Russian republic, Meshketian Turks in Uzbekistan, Poles in Lithuania and Armenians in Azerbaïdzhân. In a number of cases such national minorities were forcibly

uprooted from their homeland by Stalin at the close of the Second World War and dumped in another republic.

Just as the republics are in the process of secession from Moscow, so too in many cases such national minorities are attempting to secede from the republics in which they live.

In Moldova the Gagauz Turks have declared their independence, whilst the Russian-speaking minority has set up the Transdnistrian Republic. In Georgia the South Ossetians and the Abkhazians have likewise both sought to establish their own republics. In Russia the Tatars have declared an independent Tatarstan, in Ukraine the population of the Crimean peninsula has voted for independence in a referendum, and in Azerbaïdzhân the Armenian population of the Nagorny Karabakh region has been demanding transfer of sovereignty over the region to Armenia since the mid-1980s.

Apart from broader questions of principle, such examples show up the futility of attempting to divide the world up into "bad oppressor nations" and "good oppressed nations". Are Georgians, for example, a "good oppressed nation" because of their unwilling incorporation into the Soviet Union, or a "bad oppressor nation" because of the treatment suffered by the Abkhazian and South Ossetian minorities?

Such national minorities have legitimate fears and grievances. Armenians in Nagorny Karabakh, for example, have long suffered discrimination by the Azeri republican government, whilst Russians in Moldova and Estonia now fear discrimination and employment problems due to Moldovan and Estonian having been effectively raised to the official state language in the two republics, respectively.

However, there is a further complicating factor in this myriad of competing ethnic rivalries: there is evidence to suggest that unrest amongst national minorities (especially Russian national minorities) in different republics is being encouraged by the hard-line Stalinists in an attempt to hinder the progress of the republics towards secession from the central government.

This is clearly the case in the Baltic republics, where so-called "Committees of National Salvation" (consisting of pro-Moscow CP members and army and KGB chiefs) have been set up to oppose secession, and radio broadcasts in Russian have appealed to local Russians to mobilise opposition to the nationalist governments. *Pravda* recently has been performing a similar function. In

December it ran a series of articles containing appeals from "representatives" of Russian minorities in different republics, and also from pro-Moscow CPs in some republics, calling for central government intervention to end the persecution faced by Russian minority populations.

The influence of hardline Stalinism is likewise apparent in some (though certainly not all) cases where national minorities have declared their own independent republics. Because of its identification with Stalinism, the word "socialism" generally has a thoroughly negative connotation in the Soviet Union. But the Russians in Moldova have established a Transdnistrian Soviet Socialist Republic, whilst the Tatar parliament has declared independence from the Russian republic on the grounds that "Tatarstan has not given up its socialist road, whereas the draft constitution of Russia makes no mention of socialism".

The new draft union treaty proposed by Gorbachev (who has become increasingly hostile to the growing republican separatism — he has warned of central government "coming to resemble something like an amoeba") to the Congress of People's Deputies last December also encourages national minorities to break away from republics which are themselves breaking away from the Soviet Union.

The contents of the proposed treaty would allow for Russian speakers in the Baltic states to maintain direct links with the centre, even if the Baltic states became fully independent. The same holds true for the South Ossetians and Abkhazians in Georgia, or Gagauz Turks and Russians in Moldova. According to the chairperson of the Supreme Soviet Council of Nationalities: "People who have no statehood will be able to take part in the union treaty. They can be represented by their national associations or other organisations."

The manipulation of national minorities by the more conservative forces in Soviet society does not undermine their right to secede from the republics in which they live, any more than the oppression of such minorities by different republics undermines the right of those republics to secede from the central government.

What is clear, however, is that without a dramatic resolution of the hundred and one different national questions in the Soviet Union, the break-up of the Soviet Union into its "constituent" republics will not put an end to national oppression but rather create or reinforce a new set of antagonistic and oppressive national relationships.



Finney and Byrne as Leo and Tom

An old fogey writes...

Radio

By Jean Lane

Not having managed to get within spitting distance of a television all week, I have decided to convert this temporarily into a radio column instead.

For the first time in years, and as a result of moving jobs, I now listen to Radio One all day long. The standard of music put out today seems to me to be very bad; not all of it, for sure, but most.

'My god', I thought, 'they still play Lou Reed on the radio' one morning when the opening bars of *Take a Walk on the Wild Side* came over the air. But the Lou Reed bit turned into a bizarre compilation of sounds picked from various old and new tracks overlaid with the most puzzling lyrics which went something like 'Can I kick it, Yes you can' over and over again.

This was my first encounter with 'sample recording' and the 'remix', and it seems that much of the music played on Radio One consists of these. Music isn't written: it's borrowed, mixed up and regurgitated. The skills involved are purely technical or electronic.

By the end of one day of this you do start tapping your feet at a track that is being played for the eighth time: not so much because the sound has grown on you as because you've been bludgeoned into submission.

I am aware that I am beginning to sound like my parents used to sound when they complained at my playing Osibisa, Stevie Wonder or Motown records over and over again. And I find it worrying. Am I turning into a conservative old fogey who is just against what the youth like because it's theirs? I don't think so. I think I don't like this stuff because it's crap.

Compare the words from Bob Dylan's *Masters of War* song: "and I'll stand over your grave until I'm sure that you're dead", with the immortal "wiggle it just a little bit" by some thankfully memorable band. Or Bob Marley's "if you are the big tree, we are the small axe, ready to cut you down" with Iron Maiden's "take your daughter to the slaughter".

Just as there is a link between unemployment and crime, so the political situation we live in affects the music we write or play. For the last 10 to 15 years there has been little to give hope or inspiration to young music-makers, unlike in the '60s and early '70s when the Vietnam war radicalised whole masses of youth creating a wealth of new, daring and political musical material.

Perhaps the Gulf war and the ensuring radicalisation will see the death of the remix and the beginning of new inspiration.

In the meantime, it is little wonder that Radio One has to pay people to listen with cash hand-outs of £1,000 a time.



Dylan

Terminal cool

Cinema

By Belinda Weaver

Miller's Crossing is one long cliché. It's the stalest of stale: everything in it is derivative.

It's a film that comes from films so it seems claustrophobic and tired. I've seen a hundred films like it, I've read books like it. It's time to call a halt.

It's a gangster movie, supposedly set in Prohibition America, and the tone and style it's striving for is Raymond Chandler hard-boiled. But it misses by a mile.

It's probably no accident that the city it's set in is unnamed; there never was such a place, except in the fantasies of the Coen Brothers (who made the film). It misses out on the Chandler front too. There's none of the tension or vitality Chandler was a master of, and we don't care two hoots about the fate of the hard-

boiled hero, Tom Riordan. We don't root for him the way we did for Chandler's Philip Marlowe, the man who walked mean streets in search of justice.

Tom Riordan isn't in search of justice; he isn't in search of anything, except perhaps oblivion in a whiskey bottle. He's enervated everyone else with contempt, and we're supposed to drool.

Far too many filmmakers are in love with the idea of this kind of Byronic, loner hero, the laconic, hard-drinking tough guy who makes all the other guys look like wimps. Riordan takes an incredible amount of punishment in the movie, blow upon blow, but he gets up with a wisecrack every time and heads straight back to the whisky bottle.

Maybe the Coens can warm to that, can find it admirable; to me it says pathetic. What are they trying to say? Or prove? Would they want to be Tom Riordan? Dream on, boys.

This fantasy is all there is in the movie. The plot, such as it is, hardly hangs together, being just a mesh of cross and double cross with buckets of blood thrown in. The Coens seem to be victims of special effects-ism, a disease that afflicts filmmakers who can't think what to do next.

The technology is there, they think; why not use it? Hence whole slabs of yawn-inducing punch-ups

"The Coens seem to be victims of special effects-ism, a disease that afflicts filmmakers who can't think what to do next."

(which only leave marks on the bad guys; Riordan is unscathed) or vomit-making gory bits.

Gangsters have been done, bone crunching has been done, gore has been done — to death. Is it too much to ask for a story?

Miller's Crossing supposedly deals with the conflict between Irish gang boss, Leo, and the up-and-coming Italian, Johnny Caspar, who wants to muscle in on his racket, but it never comes to anything. It isn't rooted anywhere, the way *The Godfather* was.

We have no sense of Leo's rise, or the rise of the man who threatens him, and even more fatally, we don't much care. Riordan, who's Leo's advisor, keeps telling Leo he's dumb, but if Leo is so dumb, how did he get where he is? The Coens aren't telling. Leo is as cardboard as everyone else.

The only character who connects (Tom is too clapped out for us to care about) is Verna, the girl both Tom and Leo want. Verna is at least loyal to her good-for-nothing brother, Bernie (who's the cause of the trouble between Caspar and Leo) and she cares more than she should for the worthless Tom. But the film trashes Verna, the way it trashes everyone. We don't get to focus on her.

It's a nasty touch that Bernie's character is Jewish. Caspar's complaint is that Bernie doesn't abide by the gangster code of "ethics". He's too greedy to play by the rules, so he must be eliminated. The film piles anathema upon anathema on Bernie, who's shown as snivelling and cowardly too. Caspar, though a buffoon, is at least honest according to his lights, and Tom of course is the last word in deadpan Irish cool. Even Leo the sap is soft on Verna. Only Bernie is bad through and through.

Is this anti-semitic? Or just thoughtless? Nothing in the film feels thought through; it's all just an excuse for cynical world-weary nihilism with a whisky bottle thrown in. The Coens are into style, and what they see as terminal cool. Terminal is right; it's the last time I waste my money on their derivative rubbish.

Hanging on the old barbed wire

Songs of Liberty and Rebellion

Hanging on the old barbed wire was written by soldiers in the trenches in the First World War. Designed to be sung while marching, the song is one of many showing disgust at the way the inequalities of rich and poor are perpetuated even in war and death.

If you want to find the general I know where he is
Know where he is
Know where he is
(Repeat)
He's pinning another medal on his chest
I saw him
I saw him

Pinning another medal on his chest
Pinning another medal on his chest

If you want to find the colonel I know where he is
Know where he is
Know where he is
(Repeat)
He's sitting in comfort stuffing his bloody gut
I saw him
I saw him
Sitting in comfort stuffing his bloody gut
Sitting in comfort stuffing his bloody gut

If you want to find the sergeant I know where he is

I know where he is
I know where he is
(Repeat)
He's drinking all the company rum
I saw him
I saw him
Drinking all the company rum
Drinking all the company rum

If you want to find the private I know where he is
I know where he is
I know where he is
(Repeat)
He's hanging on the old barbed wire
I saw him
I saw him
Hanging on the old barbed wire
Hanging on the old barbed wire

No mandate from CND conference for purge

SOAPBOX

Laurens Otter, anarchist-pacifist and long-time CND activist, comments on the attempts to purge the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

The CND officials have apparently supplied the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf with a pre-prepared policy

statement, which all members have been asked to sign or to leave the organisation. They have no mandate which I know of from CND conference.

The ostensible purpose is to get rid of the Trots. There is certainly much about the behaviour of vanguardist groups (not unfortunately confined to the followers of Lev Davidovitch Bronstein), which puts off potential converts, and which means that some campaigns might be better without them. Experience suggests that faced with such measures

the vanguardists would find some weasel-word-formula to get round them, and those excluded will include many dedicated campaigners.

Everyone remaining within the Committee is, it seems, expected to support sanctions. Voluntary sanctions such as anti-racists have used in boycotting South Africa are one thing; sanctions which depend on state intervention, warships in the Gulf, are another. The Libertarian or Pacifist Left cannot support these.

Nor are sanctions likely to be accepted by the Muslim youth currently being politicised by the growth of jingoism and racism accom-

panying the war. The Muslim community is struck by the disparity between war for the UN resolution condemning Iraq and nothing

"Support for military-backed sanctions against Iraq is hardly going to appear in Arab eyes as non-aligned"

done about earlier sanctions condemning Israel.

If the mainstream peace movement insists on support for military-backed sanctions against Iraq it is hardly

going to appear in Arab eyes as taking a non-aligned position.

It is one thing to condemn Saddam Hussein, it is quite a different thing to make a judgement about the correct relationship between Iraq and Kuwait.

If the peace movement is to insist on Kuwait's independence, without, say, a plebiscite, or constitutional reforms in Kuwait; if, moreover, this is to be done without an equal insistence on Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza Strip, then it will have abandoned any claim to be non-aligned and it will be sanctioning military power to enforce in-

justice.

This new schism will make matters complex given that the majority of the smaller Trotskyist groups claim there is a duty to support Saddam Hussein, alleging that he is waging an anti-imperialist struggle, and consequently already supporting rival campaigns calling for victory to Saddam.

We face the prospect of having two organisations calling for Iraqi victory, a third effectively demanding victory for the USA by non-overtly military means, and the real peace movement excluded from all!

But then, we have had to work in an uncongenial setting before!

The weird history of Socialist Action

By Martin Thomas

A lot is weird about the recent goings-on in the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, but nothing weirder than the role of *Socialist Action*.

How did this small left group, invisible in all the anti-war mobilisations, manage to get to the centre of the Committee? (The Committee's secretary, Carol Turner, is a *Socialist Action* supporter). And, having got there, why does it join in a purge against those sharing its own policy of support for Iraq in the Gulf war?

It is a long story, and there isn't space for it all here. Even a short outline has to go back to 1971, when John Ross, the chief ideologue of *Socialist Action* today, joined the International Marxist Group.

The IMG was a small, dim group. Its chief distinguishing thought was enthusiastic speculation about the revolutionary

EYE ON THE LEFT

socialist qualities of movements such as Castroism in Cuba and the NLF in Vietnam. It had done good work in building the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and, like all the left groups, it had grown in the agitation of the late '60s.

But it was floundering. It was narrowly student-based, at a time when industrial militancy was rising. It was involved in, or ran, a vast range of campaigns, none of which ever seemed to come to much.

And then came Ross. A student at Oxford University, he had been a Maoist and then a "bright young thing" in the SWP (then called IS). In fact — though he denies it — he joined the IS as a scout for Reg Birch's Maoist group — and stayed! During a spell in hospital he was recruited to the IMG. Gathering around himself a group of students and ex-students who likewise fancied themselves as intellectuals, he

quickly kicked the old leadership of the IMG into the sidelines and took over the group for his so-called "new thinking".

The "new thinking" was as nearly as possible the opposite of *Socialist Action's* current approach. The error, it declared, of all previous Trotskyism and of the old leadership of the IMG was to make "calls to action". In truth the job of Marxists was to make rounded general propaganda.

The IMG's members reoriented to industrial struggles, using social-security advice through Claimants' Unions as their means to make contact, avoiding conflict with militants by avoiding "calls to action", and making general propaganda.

The "new thinking" worked as a means for reorienting and managing the group — or at least it worked for a short while. In the summer of 1972 Uganda expelled its Asian community. The Tory government honoured the Asians' British passports and admitted them to Britain. There was a racist backlash. The IMG's paper commented: "Asians: Big Chance for Left".

The reasoning was that the racist backlash created a big need for general socialist propaganda. (Analogy — "Black Death: Big Chance for Doctors").



1979: Revolutionary defeatism?

At this time many of Ross's former allies rebelled. Over the next few months a big opposition developed in the IMG.

Its chief agitation was for the IMG to adopt the "call to action" *General Strike to kick the Tories Out!* This was a commonplace slogan of the left in those days of high industrial militancy against the Tory government; and, in my view, a confused slogan too. Nevertheless it gave the anti-Ross faction a clear and unmistakable banner.

Ross responded by outflanking the opposition. In early 1973 he took up *General Strike to kick the Tories out!* as his own slogan, and started denouncing the opposition for their "social-democratic" misunderstanding of it!

Only in a group where the activists' basic Marxist education and critical faculties had been first softened by the years of speculation about the "world revolutionary process", then overwhelmed by hundreds of pages of philosophical mumbo-jumbo about the "new thinking", could this bizarre turn have been possible. Only in such a group could Ross's combination of manic energy, low ingenuity, high pretence, and utter shamelessness in the use and abuse of ideas have qualified him for leadership.

That turn set the pattern for 12 years or so. Constantly stealing marches on an increasingly punch-drunk but usually uproarious opposition, Ross led the group through a series of wild political cavortings.

By the time the miners' strike in 1984-85 the faction-fighting had become more complicated. As well as the "traditional" anti-Rossite opposition there was a new faction, co-thinkers of the Socialist Workers Party in the USA (no relation to the SWP-Britain), whose chief plank was political identification with a "new revolution" to be found in the Sandinistas, the Cuban government, and the ANC in South Africa.

The "traditional" opposition insisted on some critical distance from those forces, and stressed more serious work in

the Labour Party. (After being largely sidelined by the big Labour Party struggles of 1979-81 — in the 1979 election campaign it ran, jointly with some smaller groups, a slate of anti-Labour candidates called *Socialist Unity* — the IMG had dissolved and regrouped around a newspaper in the Labour Party, *Socialist Action*).

Ross's faction maintained control by tacking between the two other factions, allying first with one and then with the other. Then he outflanked them both, simultaneously.

He insisted on 100%-uncritical support of Scargill in the miners' strike, and declared that the miners' leadership was part of a new class-struggle vanguard worldwide, together with the ANC, the Sandinistas, and various Labour left groupings (Black Sections, Women's Action Committee, Campaign Group of MPs). Thus he could be more pro-Sandinista than the SWP co-thinkers and more Labour Party oriented than the other opposition!

This ideological manoeuvre did not hold the group together, but it did enable Ross to keep control of *Socialist Action* while the two oppositions flaked away — the SWP co-thinkers to form the Communist League, and the traditional opposition to launch *International*, then *Socialist Outlook*.

There is some justice in politics, and *Socialist Action* has declined from a weekly paper to a thin magazine published about four times a year. Ross has rallied the group by declaring that the decline is not a decline. On the contrary, *Socialist Action* has broken away from the sectarian fringes of politics and is into the big time.

Motivated by its new ideology, the group round *Socialist Action*, now very small, has squarrelled its way into many leading positions in the ancillary staff of the broader Labour left. Carol Turner, for example, is secretary of Labour CND, and that gave her the basis to become secretary of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

The broad reformist left is

usually short of quartermasters and aides-de-camp, and no-one fills those jobs better than revolutionaries possessed by an inner vision which tells them that the reformist campaign is, in its secret essence, the stuff of revolution. *Labour Briefing* did the quartermaster work for Ken Livingstone and the local government left in the early '80s, motivated by one such inner vision; now *Socialist Action*, motivated by another, does, for example, the production and distribution of *Campaign Group News* for the Campaign Group of MPs.

Socialist Action's role in the anti-war movement marks the *reductio ad absurdum* of this latest Rossite ideology. Their pursuit of centre place in the Committee — which their inner vision tells them is the centre of revolutionary politics, despite such profane details as its support for sanctions and its equivocation on the US-British military presence in the Gulf — has led them to outlaw their own professed opinions on Iraq.

How they can extricate themselves from this latest fiasco — or indeed whether they can at all — we shall see.

The whole bizarre history is a lesson on the need to build a Marxist left wing in the labour movement based on clear ideas and strict political accounting.

In their outward form, the IMG and *Socialist Action* have been attempts to build such a left wing. In reality they have been the opposite; to borrow an image from nuclear physics, they have been the "anti-matter" of Marxist politics.

A Marxist left wing is the memory of the labour movement. Activists grouped together only organisationally, without a theoretical basis, have only their individual experience to go on; they lack the discipline of having to spell out collective ideas at each stage, compare what's said today to what's been said in the past, analyse mistakes, learn lessons; they are easily swayed by the ebbs and flows of amorphous left opinion.

Far from being an antidote, a contribution to forming a continuous memory, the Ross grouping has worked to wipe out even such consistent memory as honest and serious individuals without theoretical baggage or the aid of a collective might have.

All the twists and turns, from the "new thinking" in 1971 to the latest gambit, have been basically bright ideas for organisational advantage. And the theoretical uproar surrounding them has served not to put the gambits in broad context, or to provide a framework for evaluating them, but to obscure, thwart and derail even the most elementary common-sense practical evaluation.

Instead of theory illuminating practice, and practice checking and exposing errors in theory, theory has been subordinated to perceived practical advantage, and practical judgement subordinated to manufactured theoretical mumbo-jumbo.

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 21 February

Anti-war meeting, West Sussex Institute, 7.00.
Cardiff anti-war benefit. 12 local bands at Bogy's nightclub, 8.00-1.00

Friday 22 February

Ireland: Geoff Bell debates Austen Morgan. Jacksons Lane Community Centre, 271 Archway Road, London N6, 7.30. Organised by Pluto Books
North West Labour Against the War meeting. Manchester Town Hall, 7.30. Speakers include Eddie Newman MEP, Mike Hindley MEP, Cate Murphy
CND Lobby of Parliament Against the Gulf War

Saturday 23 February

Sheffield Socialist Organiser day school: "Gulf war: the issues for socialists", 12.00-5.00, Poly Student Union
Upper Heyford anti-war demonstration. Assemble 11.00, Lower Heyford Railway Station

Sunday 24 February

"Why we orient to the labour

movement", London SO educational. Details 071 639 7965

Monday 25 February

Socialist Organiser London Forum: "Lesbian and gay liberation: the socialist agenda". LSE, Houghton St, 7.30. Speakers include Peter Tatchell, Janine Booth (NUS Women's Officer), Jon Johnson (Rouge)

Tuesday 26 February

Southwark Labour Against the War, Peckham Town Hall, 7.30. Speakers include Dawn Primarolo MP, Alice Mahon MP, Gavin Strang MP

Wednesday 27 February

Anti-war lobby of the TUC. Assemble 8.15, Congress House, Gt Russell St, London. Called by NUJ Book Branch
Manchester Poly SO meeting: "Israel, Palestine and the Gulf war", lunchtime. Speaker John O'Mahony
Manchester University SO meeting: "Israel, Palestine and the Gulf war", 3.00. Speaker John O'Mahony

Thursday 28 February

Huddersfield Poly SO meeting:

"Where we stand", 1.00. Speaker John O'Mahony
Bradford University SO meeting: "Where we stand", 5.00. Speaker John O'Mahony
"Israel, Palestine and the Gulf War", Leeds SO meeting, 7.30, Packhorse Pub, Woodhouse Lane. Speaker John O'Mahony
Lancaster University SO meeting: "Israel, Palestine and the Gulf war", 1.00. Speaker Mark Sandell
Newcastle Poly SO meeting: "Capitalism, socialism and war", 12.30

Nottingham SO meeting: "Why students should oppose the Gulf war", 8.00, International Centre, Mansfield Road. Speaker Mark Sandell

Friday 1 March

Sheffield University SO meeting: "Where we stand", 12.00. Speaker John O'Mahony
"George Fox and Millenarianism", 6.30, Friends Meeting House, Euston, London. Speaker Christopher Hill

Saturday 2 March

Workers Liberty dayschool, St Mary's Centre, Middlesbrough, 11.00 start
Anti-war demonstration in London called by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

Trade unionists lobby the TUC Feb 27:

Union anti-war opposition grows

By Mac Clarke, NUJ Book Branch.

Support is growing for our lobby of the TUC general council on the theme "Trade unionists must say: stop the war now!"

With only a week to go, activists need to organise delegations and transport to the lobby. Already we have received offers of support from the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. There is a great groundswell of opinion in the trade unions against this war.

As Kenny Murphy, TGWU senior steward at Vauxhall Ellesmere Port, put it: "When we received the TUC statement [supporting the war] everyone in our branch was disgusted".

Andy Dixon, an Executive member of the National Union of Teachers, underlined the argument:

"The General Council's stand on this war is their most craven act in a decade of capitulation to the Tory government!"

The key task for activists now is to take the fight against the war into those unions that are crucial for Kinnock in the Labour Party. The TGWU, NCU, UCW, GMB and RMT have all either supported the war or remained silent. We must break that silence and build a broad trade union campaign against the war.

Support the lobby! Assemble 8.15am, Wednesday 27 February, at Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

- Tony Benn MP
- Jake Ecclestone, Deputy General Secretary NUJ
- Kyran Connolly (NUJ Executive)
- Madeline Davidson (Secretary, NUJ Book Branch)
- Jim Boumelha (FoC Pergamon Strikers, NUJ Executive)
- Andy Smith (FoC Taylor and Francis strikers, NUJ Exec)
- Krysia Maciejewska (NUJ Exec)
- Johnny Byrne (TGWU Executive)

Leeds Teachers' Salaries Conference, representing 33 local NUT associations

- Tony Lennon President BETA
- Ian Driver (NUPE Executive, Southwark Labour councillor)
- Ian Brown (EPIU National Plumbing Officer)
- Andy Dixon (NUT Executive)
- Anita Dickinson (NUT Executive)
- Barrie Frost (NUT Executive)
- Nic Gavin (NUT Executive)
- Dave Harvey (NUT Executive)
- Mary Hufford (Deputy General Secretary NUT)
- Ian Murch (NUT Executive)
- Bernard Regan (NUT Executive)
- Howard Roberts (NUT Executive)
- David Roper (NUT Executive)
- Marion Shirley (NUT Executive)
- Mark Slater (NUT Executive)
- Colin Tarrant (NUT Executive)
- Roy Lockett, Deputy General Secretary ACTT
- Martin Spence (ACTT Executive)
- North East Area National Union of Mineworkers
- John Tocher (AEU North West Divisional organiser)
- Len Brindle AEU District Secretary
- Preston, CSEU District Candidate 1990
- Dave Gough, AEU District Secretary
- Liverpool, AEU Presidential Candidate 1990
- Jim Fitzpatrick (FBU Executive)

- NCU Westminster branch
- Alex McFadden, Wirral Trades Council
- Wear & District Trades Council
- Newcastle upon Tyne Trade Union Council
- UCATT Crook, Branch, Co. Durham
- Apex Holborn
- Dave Chapple (Secretary, UCW Bridgwater)
- Bridgwater Trades Council
- Southwark Trades Council
- Tim Cooper, secretary Notts County NALGO
- Brian Gardner, secretary Islington NALGO
- Mickey Fenn (victimised Tilbury Docks shop steward)
- Tom Cleary (Gen Sec, Leeds NUT)
- Brian Halliwell (Division Secretary, Notts NUT)
- Alison Miles, chair West End MSF, MSF regional executive
- Liam McQuade, branch secretary LOMO/C&CS, UCW
- Rod Finlison, London Divisional Committee AEU, AEU Ford Dagenham

- John Bohanna, senior steward TGWU Metal, body and stamping plant Ford Halewood
- Joan Bohanna, Convenor SATA B74
- Kenny Murphy (Senior steward,



Willis applauds the slaughter as a 'positive development'

- TGWU Vauxhall Motors, Ellesmere Port)
- Bob Trueblood, General Secretary Bolton NUT
- Crompton Cornthwaite, Assistant Secretary Bolton NUT
- Mike Greenalgh, Past President Bolton NUT
- Dick Davis, Secretary South Trafford Naffhe
- Hackney Division NUT
- Richard Reisner (Secretary Hackney NUT)
- Suzie Bough (Equal Opportunity Officer, Hackney NUT)
- Mark Lashington (Press and publicity officer, Hackney NUT)
- Jane Evans (Assistant Sec, Hackney NUT)
- Jean Murray (H&S officer, Hackney NUT)
- Sean Glancy (Treasurer, Hackney NUT)
- Veronica Keenan (Past President, Hackney NUT)
- Andy Clarke (President, Hackney NUT)
- Marie Adreotoyi (Vice President, Hackney NUT)
- Tony Purcell (Membership Secretary, Hackney NUT)
- Ealing Division NUT
- Southwark Division NUT
- Mike Tucker, NALGO NEC
- Jon Appleton, NALGO NEC
- Malcolm Hardy, NALGO NEC
- All in a personal capacity
- Contact NUJ Book branch: 314-20
- Grays Inn Road, London WC1X
- 8DP. Phone 081 801 2841.

Civil servants PSA dispute ends

By John Moloney, PSA London

PSA members in the PSA have voted 496 to 97 in favour of accepting senior management's latest offer. The turnout was low for such an important ballot, about 50%.

Personally, I am disappointed with the result as I campaigned against the offer, because it is simply not good enough. PSA is being converted into a company with commercial accounts, etc. The plan is then to sell off the company, or bits — at least the profitable bits. In order to be viable, staffing has to be slimmed down drastically.

Thousands of jobs have to go. Senior management hopes to do with through a combination of redundancy/early retirement, transfers to other government departments, and secondments. Any decent agreement has to be strong enough to cope with this situation. Our is not!

Senior management have been quite honest with us. They don't promise anything, they just say that they will do their best. So after five months of strike action all we have got is a promise that senior management will do their "best".

And guess who was at the forefront of pushing through this rotten deal? Militant CPSA supreme and deputy general secretary John Macreadie.

In the event of a bomb scare...

By Trudy Saunders, DH HQ

The Tories' war for oil in the Gulf has had a number of effects here in Britain — one being the fear of bomb attacks from those sympathetic to Saddam Hussein.

Government offices, many housing hundreds of civil servants, are always a prime suspected target. So far, the Department of Health HQ has had a number of hoax bomb scares. Management's response to possible threats to the lives of staff? To keep everyone in the building while floor wardens (ordinary members of staff) and the police search for suspect packages!

Trade union activists must ensure that when bomb scares take place, all members of staff are evacuated immediately from the building and surrounding areas to a place of safety.

Meanwhile, the Tories are so concerned for the safety of staff that over the past few years they have privatised the security guard service despite strong evidence that private security guards do not protect buildings to the same standard.

In the long term only one Department of Health HQ building will have in-house security guards. Where? Richmond House at Whitehall which houses, yes, you've guessed it, the Department of Health Ministers!

Lessons of the Taylor and Francis strike

By Steven Holt, Taylor and Francis striker

The picket of the Taylor and Francis offices in London has been called off without the sacked editors achieving their goal of reinstatement and union recognition.

The dispute between Taylor and Francis and the NUJ continues despite the removal of the picket line, and the boycott of the Taylor and Francis books and journals set up by NATFHE and other unions will continue and be extended to the USA, the company's most profitable market.

After ten weeks on strike the NUJ chapel decided to call off

their picket, since it seemed that a very long struggle was likely to be needed. The management had been able to recruit new staff to replace some of the sacked workers and were able to continue to produce the most profitable of the journals.

The effects of late publication of some journals and a decrease in quality generally, which we expect to occur, will take some months to become apparent, owing to the long production time involved. Similarly the boycott campaign will not hit profits on journals until

subscriptions are not renewed in September.

The maintenance of a picket line from 8.30am to 5.30pm had become increasingly difficult as the number of actively participating strikers had fallen to seven by the beginning of February and the sudden cold spell made things very difficult.

The NUJ general secretary, Steve Turner, wrote a very conciliatory letter to the Taylor and Francis management, against the stated wishes of the chapel, which largely removed the pressure on the management

and demoralised the strikers.

If we had been able to get solidarity action from SOGAT and the NGA typesetters, printers and warehouse staff, we would probably have been able to win the strike very quickly. Being a very new chapel, we had no time to build links with other workers before the sackings forced us to go on strike. On a more general level, trade union activists in all unions should build a campaign to oppose the 1982 Industrial Relations Act which makes secondary picketing illegal.

This can only be done by building confidence within the trade unions and so socialists must politically educate union members so that they become activists. After ten years of Thatcherism morale is low throughout the labour movement, but the poll tax and the cuts that will be imposed in both public sector and private industry as a consequence of the costs of the war will provide plenty of causes of anger. Socialists must direct this anger into building a fighting labour movement.

Manchester council workers victory

By Tony Dale (NALGO steward, Manchester City Council)

Manchester Housing Department was brought to a standstill by a week-long strike which ended in victory on 18 February.

The dispute started in the Young People's Shared Houses section over health and safety. The shared house for young homeless people in Longsight had been terrorised by a local gang, and the residents faced assaults, sexual assaults and threats.

After workers brought this to management's attention, their response was to instruct staff to attend and guard the property overnight. The staff, unhappy about being placed in this unsafe and dangerous situation, requested other options, such as security guards, or relocating the residents, be considered. Management reiterated their instructions and issued threats of disciplinary action and suspensions. All the young people's support workers, both NALGO and NUPE, walked out on strike.

On Monday 11 February the strike escalated to a department-wide strike when NUPE voted to take all-out strike action. By Tuesday NALGO, GMB and TGWU members were being picketed out. On Wednesday 13 February NALGO voted for a department-wide strike. In total, over 450 council workers joined the action.

Despite attempts by NALGO

branch officials to undermine the action, the strike was solid. It was the biggest and most effective seen in the Housing Department for many years.

Following negotiations management backed down and came up with a new set of procedures for dealing with similar problems in the shared houses: in the future the use of security guards will be an option.

The Young People's Support Workers did not get everything they wanted, but were happy to accept the settlement.

The strike was an important and significant victory for housing workers in Manchester. Management are preparing plans to restructure the department and are seeking job description changes. This strike is a warning to management to take workers'

concerns seriously.

The strike involved members from four different unions. Many of the problems in the dispute were the two main unions taking different decisions on tactics. The division of the workforce into two main unions can only help management. The time has surely come for one union in the Housing Department.

Southampton students and workers unite:

Health workers against the war

By Darren Bloye, Southampton Health Workers Against the War

The south of England will play a major role in the event of large numbers of casualties from the Gulf war.

Southampton's hospitals are a major regional centre. Portsmouth has a naval hospital. Salisbury has a regional plastic surgery unit and air bases in Oxfordshire appear to be the main offloading points for casualties.

In Southampton General, two wards are to be set aside for casualties, but since we know the staff canteen has been measured up for beds, the true extent of the casualties could be enormous.

This is in the context of the cancellation of "routine" operations, such as paediatrics, and ward closures because of resource shortages.

Furthermore, the experience of major disasters, such as King's Cross or Piper Alpha, is that the specialist medical services are quickly overwhelmed: there are only 150 specialist burns beds in the whole country!

Against this background the war could pose a huge threat to the NHS; whilst the private hospital across the road from the General will carry on regardless, neither their beds nor their staff would be affected.

In response we have set up a hospital based group against the Gulf war with both health workers and students as members. Our group is small, but we've managed to produce two leaflets for circulation around the hospital which we've used as the base for a stall and

Midlands media workers against the war

The recently launched Media Workers Against the War is putting down regional roots.

Midlands media workers — writers, photographers, broadcasters, press officers and media students — attended a public meeting in Birmingham to launch a regional group.

They heard speeches from *Guardian* and former *Daily Telegraph* columnist Edward Pearce, and Tim Gopsill, a former *Birmingham Post and Mail* reporter, who now works for the National Union of Journalists.

The NUJ's Birmingham and Wolverhampton branches sponsored the meeting.

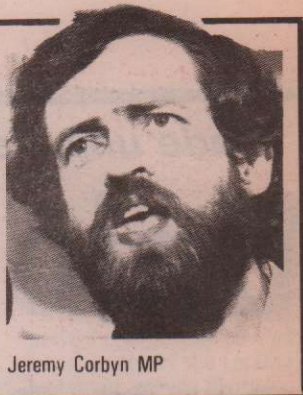
Birmingham branch chair Miles Barter — a freelance journalist — said: "Many media workers are opposed to the fighting in the Gulf and are sickened by the warmongering of much of the press."

"We want to encourage journalists to challenge censorship — from both sides in the conflict — and ensure that anti-war sentiments are covered properly."

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

"Detainees are kept locked up for 19 hours a day. The slopping out facilities are atrocious. Facilities for legal visits are severely limited."



Police state swoop in Britain

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

When I was first contacted by relatives I assumed I was dealing with an immigration case where the procedures had gone wrong until I spoke to the Home Office. They told me that the Arab nationals about whom I was enquiring had been held 'under the Secretary of State's powers'.

After considerable pressure the Secretary of State wrote to MPs on 24 January stating that since 2 August 160 Iraqis, 6 Jordanians, 4 Lebanese, 1 Yemeni and 1 naturalised US citizen of Lebanese origin had been served with notices of intention to deport them.

The Home Secretary also confirmed that he did intend to deport all the Arab civilians back to their country of origin. The Iraqis will be sent back to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the Palestinians to the West Bank and other nationals to other areas of the war zone. It is this aspect which the Home Office insists means that this is not internment.

There is no appeal against the Secretary of State's decisions. These decisions have been made by the Secretary of State on the basis of confidential information. There is no independent scrutiny of the decisions.

In addition, the Home Office also state that 35 Arab nationals who were here as students are being held by the Ministry of Defence as prisoners of war. They are alleged to be members of the Iraqi armed forces.

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that they no longer have any Iraqi military personnel in training in Britain. They state

that all contracts for military training of Iraqis were cancelled following the Iraqi execution of Farzad Bazoft in March last year.

In other words Britain was training Saddam Hussein's forces up to only five months prior to the invasion of Kuwait.

I met some civilian detainees in Pentonville prior to their removal to Yorkshire, miles away from their families and friends. They are being kept locked up for 19 or 20 hours per day. The slopping out facilities were atrocious. Facilities for legal visits are severely limited. They were being held in a wing of a Victorian prison that had been closed for refurbishment.

In his letter to MPs the Secretary of State referred to the Fourth Geneva Convention and stated 'In respect of protected persons held in detention, the convention lays down certain specific requirements as to the conditions and regime under which they are detained.'

Most of the detainees and their families are terrified to be identified. They are afraid that to speak out will merely increase the likelihood of other members of their family or friends being detained.

The words 'national security' cancel all the rights of the individual and decisions which could mean life or death to these people are being taken without any safeguard or scrutiny.

It is very easy to speak about human rights when they are not under attack, but there has been a deafening silence about these gross violations of civil liberties by civil liberty organisations.

This is an issue that must be taken up by those not directly affected. It must not be ignored.

From Socialist Campaign Group News.



Burned child in Baghdad hospital.

By John O'Mahony

When an American bomb blew up a civilian air raid shelter in Baghdad last week it killed maybe 400 people, most of them women and children.

For a lot of people in the West that bomb killed something else too: it killed belief in the official "allied" pretence that civilians are not being targeted in this war.

Others have had their willingness to accept that comforting lie greatly undermined.

The lie that Iraqi civilians are not targets is the single great lie of the Gulf war.

It is and always has been an outright lie. And it is a self-evident lie.

Quite apart from direct civilian casualties, like the 400 in the air raid shelter and the thousands of others killed by bombs, the entire population of Iraqi cities like Baghdad and Basra are targets!

It is simply not possible — and anyone who tells you it is is a liar — to destroy Iraq's water supply systems, its electrical supply networks,

The slaughter of the innocents

and its bridges, roads and airfields without making life impossible for vast numbers of its people.

What the bombs have already done to the water supply of Iraq's cities must mean that many thousands of babies and young children will certainly die of diarrhoeal diseases.

The Iraqi people and their entire society are being targeted to punish Saddam Hussein and his butchering militaristic regime. It must be the intention of the political masters of the bombers to do just that.

The slaughter of the innocents in the air raid shelter last week was only a dramatically highlighted small part of the slaughter of civilians which has been going on ever since the bombing started a month ago. It is still going on.

It will continue for a long time after the war stops.

When the true story of this war can finally be written without the intrusion of the military censors and the voluntary media self-censorship we have now then the widespread public acceptance of this war's Great Lie will be seen as the astonishing and shameful thing it is. It will be seen as doubly shameful for the journalists — and especially, shameful for the "Gulf War liberals" — who foster and preserve it now.

Babbling at every opportunity about "freedom of the press", these literary prostitutes have helped the warmongers poison the wells of public information on this life and death question.

The few reporters in Baghdad all — with Iraqi censorship removed on this

occasion — reported they could see no evidence for the US claim that the shelter had military functions. The desk warriors in Wapping and Docklands all pumped out the US story as fact. Reporting? What reporting? Cheering on the war machine is all that matters to these lierchants.

Not target the civilian population?

Of course they are targetting the civilian population! Not only the ones and tens and four hundreds who happen to come under their bombs, but the whole civilian population of Iraq's cities.

In its entirety!

Especially the young children and babies who cannot survive the destruction of the water supply system.

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