

The conspiracy against the Birmingham Six
Six
centre pages



Revolt in Iraq
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For Workers' Liberty!
For socialist renewal!



The left and the war page 7



Their new world order
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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

US/Britain out of the Gulf



Charred remains of Iraqi soldier bombed trying to escape Kuwait. US pilots called it a 'turkey shoot'

Murdering hypocrites

Right up until hours before the ceasefire, the US and its allies continued to bomb Baghdad. They massacred the fleeing, shell-shocked Iraqi troops — shattered by the weeks of bombing — when they were already defeated. They continued to kill civilians, they continued the destruction that will make many more children and old people die because Iraq's electricity, water supply and sewage systems have been smashed. Now they stand by in Kuwait while enraged Kuwaitis indiscriminately round up and kill Palestinians. The war was never for freedom or liberation or international law, but to crush Iraq, and gain US control of the Gulf. Bush and Major are murdering hypocrites.

The lie machine

Today VICTORY
The day the Rats conquered Saddam



LIBERTY
and freed a nation

The US-led forces smashed into Iraq, massacring helplessly bomb-battered conscripts and civilians, and the tabloid press called it "Liberty!". The US had "freed a nation", they said, though the Emir had declared martial law in Kuwait and lynch mobs roamed its streets.

WAR IN THE DESERT
Daddy must kill that nasty man

SAVE OVER £1,300 WITH NISSAN'S ALL INCLUSIVE PRICES AND FREE 3 YEAR WARRANTY

Let's see your view of strength

FIGHTING HAS TO GO ON SAY BRAVE HEROES

A British soldier's four year old daughter tried to make sense of the jingo uproar — and four-year-old reasoning got her to the level of the *Daily Star's* editorial line.

DAILY MIRROR IT'S THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS
TWEEKLY (The whole week's news in 100 pages)

Freed airman puts on a brave new face

TO HELL AND BACK

The *Mirror* was outraged by Saddam's mistreatment of PoWs, and his parading of them on TV — and quite happy about the US-led forces' parading of its cringing Iraqi prisoners on TV. And can you remember front-page features in the *Mirror* complaining about the Birmingham Six being beaten up in jail?

SUN COMING AGAIN ON SATURDAY

QUEEN IS BITTEN IN CORGI FIGHT

3 stitches after dogs turn nasty

FREE Why pay for your newspaper? There's a world of TV channels to be seen NOW

After the war — back to normal for the tabloids!



East Germany has been swept by strikes as workers fight back against the impact of private-profit economics. Above: metalworkers in Berlin

Sacked for not paying poll tax!

By Pat Markey

On Friday 22 February two journalists, members of the NUJ, were suspended from their jobs at the *Northampton Chronicle and Echo*, *Mercury* and *Herald* because they had been served with attachment of earnings for non-payment of the poll tax.

The first they heard of this was when they opened their wage packets.

The NUJ chapel met on Friday lunchtime and demanded their reinstatement. After another chapel

meeting on Monday 25 February another 22 journalists were also suspended without pay until further notice.

Meanwhile, the original two were taken back, but taken off news reporting and put on features and sport.

They had covered local government issues, including the poll tax. The union chapel regards attachment of earnings as a personal and confidential matter which should not affect employment. The latest development is that the paper's editor, Chris Hutchby, has called in four middle managers, with a view to their voluntary redundancy.

Meanwhile, journalists at

other titles owned by United Provincial Newspapers — who also own the *Star* and *Express* — at Sheffield, York, Greenock, South Wales, Harrogate and Blackpool, are to hold meetings to consider ways of supporting their Northampton colleagues.

Sheffield *Star* journalists have already voted in favour of industrial action.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to NUJ, c/o Northampton Labour Club, 97 Charles St, Northampton. Cheques should be made payable to the "Uppermount Preservation Society". For speakers phone 0604 37393 (day) or 0604 230617.

Yugoslavia moves to break up

By Steven Holt

Formal steps towards the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia have recently been taken by the elected governments of these two states.

On 20 February the Slovenian parliament passed a law that gives local legislation supremacy over the laws of the Yugoslav state. The Slovenian leader, Milan Kucan, stated that although this was not a complete declaration of independence, it paved the way for independence. The Croatian parliament passed a very similar law the following day.

The Yugoslav state president, Ante Markovic, seems to have little remaining influence. The main force in favour of holding Yugoslavia together in its present form is the army, which is largely controlled by the Serbian nationalist-Stalinist leader, Milosevic. Their response to the laws passed in Slovenia

and Croatia has been to send in troops to capture some members of the Croatian government.

This move has intensified nationalist feeling in Croatia, and provoked a mass demonstration in Zagreb (the capital of Croatia) of perhaps as many as 100,000 people.

The prospects for the various peoples of Yugoslavia do not look good even if the northern states do break away peacefully. Probably only Slovenia would be able to achieve some economic viability, the rest would slide further into poverty and chaos as the Stalinist command economy breaks down.

An independent Croatia would probably try to get economic and political control of Bosnia-Herzegovina (which was part of the Croat state 1941-1945) and would certainly repress Serbs and other minorities within its border. With increasing nationalism and the slide towards economic collapse, a revival of the Croatian fascist Ustasi movement, which ran terrorist operations in

Yugoslavia until the late 1970s, is a frightening possibility.

The southern states would come under even greater dominance by Serbia: this process may already have started a few months ago when Serbia took increased control over Kosovo and Vojvodina autonomous provinces.

The problems within Yugoslavia will have repercussions on neighbouring states also.

The struggle for independence of the Albanians in Kosovo may change into a wish to merge with Albania once Hoxha's successors are overthrown or forced to relax their grip. The Macedonian population is spread across southern Yugoslavia, northern Greece and Western Bulgaria.

All these national problems must be addressed by socialists in terms of the right to self-determination with rights for minorities. But above all we should strive for links between working people of all races, to fight for their class interests.

Can't pay, won't jail!

By Tony Serjeant, Priorswood and Taunton Deane APTU

A council's attempt to jail a single mother of three children for non-payment of poll tax was defeated last week when the judge threw out the case.

Taunton Deane Borough Council summonsed Sharon West of Bishops Lydeard to court on Wednesday 27 February to face committal proceedings for prison because bailiffs had failed to enforce a liability order on her.

The Tory-run council argued that Sharon, with children aged 2, 6, and 8 could afford to pay her poll tax because her child benefit was being increased by £1 a week!

The night before the hearing, a lobby of the council organised, demanding that councillors call off threatened jailings. The protest delayed the council meeting

for half an hour. Eventually police cleared the room. Labour Group leader Dick Newman deplored the length of time it took for the police to act!

Next day, in court, to prove she could not pay, Sharon produced a list of weekly spending that matched her income of £85.20. Asked whether she would pay £189 owed if she had the money, Sharon told magistrates, "if I had the money I'd have the choice to pay or not, but as I haven't the money, I don't."

Caring council officers suggested she spend less on heating!

Magistrates decided that the council could not prove "wilful non-payment nor culpable neglect", released Sharon, and ordered Taunton Deane to cancel her entire poll tax bill.

Sharon said: "My court case might make a difference to others. It should bring it home to people that there are many who just can't afford to pay." Sharon's case is, as far as we know, the first in the country where magistrates have recognised that someone can't pay, and have ruled that they won't jail.

Stop Lambeth witch-hunt!

By Councillor Steve French

The Labour Party's National Executive Committee agreed at its meeting last week to organise an investigation into the conduct of Lambeth Labour Group.

According to the *Guardian* the NEC were briefed by a report written by the LCC hack, Ben Lucas.

Phil Cole from the Labour Party came to our last Labour Group meeting and told us about the investigation. However, 30 of the 40

Labour councillors are opposed to the NEC's action.

I expect the inquiry will be broadened out into the running of the group.

The Lambeth Labour Group took a stand against the Gulf war and has taken some steps in opposition to the poll tax which Walworth Road disapproves of.

There are various allegations of intimidation flying around in the press. None of this is true.

The fact of the matter is that we are being witch-hunted. We will be campaigning inside the Labour Party to oppose this attack.



American troops search captured Iraqis at gunpoint

Their new order

In the *Observer* of 24 February, a military man wrote that never before in history had soldiers faced such concentrated bombing for so long. The nearest comparison he could find was from World War 2.

In 1944 a German unit suffered *two and a half hours* of continuous bombing. Many died, others went insane or killed themselves, and the rest were shattered and dazed. Much of the Iraqi army faced hours on hours of bombing for five weeks solid. It destroyed them.

As the *Observer* article pointed out, there are probably hundreds of thousands of psychological casualties to add to the tens of thousands massacred as the US-led coalition bombed and shelled the fleeing Iraqi troops.

Smart bombs, laser systems, and electronic gadgets won the Gulf war.

For centuries, it was a basic rule of warfare that technology and industrial strength brought victory. Gunpowder, and later the Maxim gun, enabled European powers and European colonists to conquer

great empires.

Wars like Vietnam's seemed to have broken that rule. Now the US has enforced it again.

The US's rapid victory, and its horrific demonstration of the power of its military technology, will strengthen the hand of the Americans.

But they will not bring a new era of stable US world domination, a new "American Century", or a new world order.

In Iraq, the best alternative for the US would be a stable pro-American puppet government, which could act as a watchdog for the whole region. It still seems unlikely that the US can get it, even after its crushing victory.

The main forces vying to replace Saddam are Shi'ite Muslim fundamentalists in southern Iraq, Kurdish nationalists in northern Iraq, and the Iraqi Communist Party. None of them are the sort of people the US prefers to deal with. And if the US can find a compliant American-educated Iraqi general, how will that general keep control over the fundamentalists, the Kurds, and the Stalinists?

Triumph for the technology of mass murder does not do away with the *political* difficulties of establishing a stable colonial or semi-colonial regime in the modern post-colonial world. Iraq is not a country of dispersed peasant communities with small, easily-coopted landlord and comprador classes; it is a country with big cities, a sizeable working class, and a big middle class.

More likely than a stable puppet government in Iraq at present seems to be the conversion of the country into something like Lebanon — its division into segments ruled by rival warlords, Kurdish nationalists in the north, Shi'ite fundamentalists in the south, and so on, with, perhaps, a long-term US military presence in the south paralleling Israel's long-term military presence in southern Lebanon.



George Bush

The Americans will have made dozens of promises to the Arab governments which supported them, and dozens of conflicting promises to Israel.

They are more likely to keep the promises to Israel. Israel's most powerful military rival has been seen off. The Palestine Liberation Organisation has suffered huge diplomatic and financial damage from its alliance with Saddam Hussein. The Arab states will be more concerned to get aid to repair the economic damage they suffered from the war than to agitate for the Palestinians.

Long-term — over decades — closer US involvement in policing the Middle East could drag the US into a position like that of Britain in the '30s and '40s, when Britain had colonial or semi-colonial rule over the Arabs of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine and simultaneously allied with the Zionist community in Palestine.

Weight of numbers and economic interest finally pushed Britain towards more concessions to the Arabs. But similar pressures could take decades to sway the US, and much can happen in the meantime.

The US will have a rough ride as policeman of the Middle East. The victory of its technology is a terrible warning to any Middle Eastern (or other Third World) people con-

templating revolt, but it does not make it all-powerful.

Anger and hatred against the Americans because of their slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians and soldiers will remain alight in the Middle East for decades to come. It will inspire revolts.

Unfortunately, the political trend best-placed to channel that revolt is *Islamic fundamentalism*. The US would prefer not to have to deal with the fundamentalists. Yet it has managed to deal with the Saudi fundamentalists, and will probably work out an adequate arrangement with the Iranian fundamentalists.

Since the USSR is *no longer* able to act as an alternative superpower, and Japan and Germany are *not yet* able to act as such, any fundamentalist regime in the Middle East which wants to do business in the world as it is will have to do business with *the* superpower, the US. It will have narrower options than the secular Arab nationalist regimes of the '50s and '60s, which could tuck and turn between the US and the USSR.

The working class and the left, however, face only repression and exploitation from the fundamentalists. A further surge of fundamentalism will be much worse news for the working class than for US imperialism.

Some groups of the Western left have indulgently, and from a safe distance, hailed the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a progressive (although distorted) anti-imperialist movement. A new rise of fundamentalism should force them to rethink.

If the secular nationalism of the Palestine Liberation Organisation is displaced, or ousted within the PLO itself, by Islamic fundamentalism, then the old formula of the PLO in the 1970s, "democratic secular Palestine", will no longer be on offer.

The "democratic secular Palestine" was always a misleading formula. Whether it was meant

sincerely or as political window-dressing, it was defined by the fact that its premiss — the creation of a single Arab-dominated state in Palestine, whether the Israeli Jews liked it or not — could be achieved only by military conquest of the area by the Arab states, by states such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In reality it *could not* be democratic.

Islamic fundamentalists will strip away all the window-dressing and all the naive good intentions. They have no time for democracy in any recognisable form, and certainly no time for secularism.

For them the answer is the slogan of the Arab chauvinists before 1967: "Drive the Jews into the sea". The left will have to define itself independently, as it did before 1967: neither for Israeli conquests, nor for Arab chauvinism, but for a socialist federation of the Middle East, with the right of self-determination for national

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

Karl Marx

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STUDENTS

Military research on campus

Get the death merchants out!

By Mark Sandell, NUS NEC (personal capacity)

The Student Federation Against the Gulf War has produced a briefing paper opposing military research on British campuses.

The author, Eddie Gonçalves (co-chair of Student CND), lays out the facts about the money-spinning weapons development being carried out in many higher education colleges.

The value of military research has risen by 400% since 1979 and includes chemical and biological weapon development and

work for the US's Strategic Defence Initiative and biological warfare programmes.

The Student Federation recently organised a Welfare not Warfare Day of Action in the colleges. One of the messages we carried out to the students was the disparity between government 'Research and Development' money spent on weapons (48%) and the amount spent in colleges on health and the environment (2.4%).

For a copy of the briefing — which is an edited version of the forthcoming Student CND 'The Campus Connection' — write to Eddie Gonçalves, c/o Leeds University Student Union.



School students protest against the war. In Germany and Italy they were in the forefront of the anti-war movement.

Keep fighting for peace!

By Nicola Butler, Student CND

The college anti-war movement has been much broader than the traditional student "left". There have been a large number of local initiatives and actions.

Activists now have to look towards a longer term, broader campaign, which links the issues of peace and disarmament to the role of the British government in

world politics and the trade in arms.

There are three main issues we now need to address:

- *Military research on campus:* we must take action against this research while awareness is still high.

- *Opposition to the arms trade:* in particular, the arms fair which will be held in Birmingham in May can act as our focus for opposition.

- *The non-proliferation campaign:* this will centre on opposition to trident, chemical and biological weapons.

How can the west say Sad-

dam Hussein should not have nuclear weapons when it had a thousand nuclear weapons in the Gulf? The Gulf war has ended the idea of "nuclear deterrence". Scud missiles were fired at Israel despite Israel's nuclear weapons.

Join Student CND: send £3 to Nicola Butler, Student CND, 168 Holloway Road, London N7.

Student CND Conference: 9, 10 March at Loughborough University Student Union.

Demonstrate to oppose trident: 12.00, 1 April at Barrow in Furness.

Left Labour students must regroup

By Mandy Gordon, NOLS conference delegate, Sheffield University Labour Club

The annual Labour Students (NOLS) conference took place last weekend (2-3 March).

Attendance was poor, with only 70 delegates there. The Kinnockite 'New Directions' faction retained control of the National Committee.

Conference rejected moves to tie NOLS to a pro-war position, and called for self-determination of the peoples of the region. Attempts to reverse NOLS' pro-PR policy were also rejected.

New Directions is defined by a hatred of "Trotskyism" rather than a positive coherent strategy. It was split on its attitude towards the Gulf war, and several New Directions delegates complained about internal NOLS decision making, particularly on NUS reform.

NOLS expects to be successful at NUS conference (at which Left Unity will be campaigning for Labour victories) and run an effective general

election campaign, so the size of the conference is worrying. Seventy delegates represents just over 2,000 members. This also shows that left Labour Clubs, if built, and represented at conference, would be a majority.

Left Unity supporter Alison Roche was elected to the National Committee, and Nick Lowles to the Standing Orders Committee.

The lesson from the conference is that the left must get back into the routine of taking on the Kinnockites inside their own organisation. This means launching a campaign for NOLS reform and linking up with the left in the Labour Party.

Timmo, the gas man, and Houdini

The death of Tim O'Leary, long-time docks secretary of the TGWU, last month, set me thinking about the terrible injustice Britain's full-time trade union officials have suffered in the Thatcher years, and about the way they are now misrepresented in Thatcherite social history.

History? "Just current politics read backwards". That definition, by a Stalinist professor, is, I suppose, the same as Bonaparte's: "History is a tale agreed upon".

One of the "tales agreed upon" during Thatcher's decade is the Tale of the Militant Trade Union Bosses and How They Were Cut Down to Size by Herself.

An irresponsible brotherhood of bigger and smaller Arthur Scargills they were, the pre-Thatcher trade union bureaucracy, according to the tale the Tories and their press have agreed upon.

In fact this is a thoroughly Stalinist rewriting of history. It is "current politics read backwards".

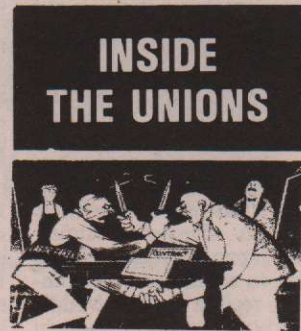
During the entire great prolonged 20-25 year cycle of working class militancy, for most of the time official strikes were very much the exception to the rule. The trade union leaders were the bitter enemies of strikes and militancy!

They fed press witchhunts against strikers, they made scabbing deals behind the backs of their members, whenever they could. They were much hated; indeed, the banked-up hatred felt by many trade unionists against their own officials helped the Tories push through anti-union legislation in the '80s.

During the years of the great working class militancy and trade union struggle, the trade union officials helped the employers control the rank and file.

They did the same thing in the mid-'70s when they were the power behind Harold Wilson's Labour government. They helped destroy working class militancy.

When the Tories came to power in 1979 the labour movement was still very strong. If the trade union leaders had organised resistance to the Tory offensive Thatcher immediately launched, Thatcher



Sean Matgamna

could have been driven from office like Heath. They crawled on their bellies instead: and the working class paid dearly for it.

But the British bosses are an ungrateful class! All the trade union leaders' work for "moderation" and "compromise" had not been enough. Thatcher was out to break, cripple and shackle the trade unions. So trade union officials found themselves playing in Tory propaganda the role of militants and firebrands they had rarely, if ever, played in real life.

Respectable and tame time-serving men and women were targeted and denounced — blamed for the deeds of the rank and file they and others like them had spent their lives fighting to stop. Piled up with shame and blame, they were, like the scapegoat in the bible, driven away into the wilderness, out of the cherished corridors of power. There they languish to this day, the targets of abuse and contempt from those they served so long and so well.

When TUC general secretary Norman Willis dropped on his knees before Princess Diana, it was probably from sheer frustration at going so long without someone to crawl to! He was desperate for a fix.

The life of Tim O'Leary, who died on 15 February, at the age of 81, could be cited to prove the absurdity of the "story" about recent working class history the Tories and the media now peddle.

A full-time union official in 1935, at the age of 25, O'Leary was Docks Secretary of the TGWU from 1956 to 1975. The dockers were the most militant workers in Britain through almost all that period.

With one exception (in 1970) all the hundreds of dock strikes were unofficial strikes. O'Leary's job was to stop strikes — and break them when he couldn't stop them.

He was hated, and with great bitterness, by "his own" rank and file. His chance of being elected to the job would have been nil. But there he was, "in for life" — or until his retirement, in the mid-'70s.

The TGWU docks officials were a notorious bunch. Conditions would vary from ship to ship and from cargo to cargo, and rates for jobs would continually have to be negotiated. One of the two T&G officials in Manchester in the 1960s was nicknamed "the gas man". He would come from negotiating to the gangway and shout down to the dockers — covered in, for example, asbestos, when flimsy sacks had broken open, thickening the air with dust — "The best I can do, lads — it's a shilling extra." Thus the gas man.

His mate, even more spineless, and pretty dim too, was known as "Houdini" after the famous American escapologist Harry



So bureaucratic were the TGWU officials that many dockers broke away to the smaller "blue" union (NASD)

Houdini. He'd come to the gangway with a similar sort of offer, and in response to protests shrug and cry: "Nothing I can do, lads. Me hands are tied! Me hands are tied!" Thus Houdini.

The "gas man" was secretary and ran the office. His route to the job included getting up at a mass meeting and defending the practice of working during rain: "I can't see anything wrong with working in the rain — provided you have a good coat."

Thus could an aspirant T&G official hope to win his spurs in the eyes of those who could give him the job!

Dockers would say of those obviously "on the make" that they wanted either to be foremen or union officials. Similar trades.

O'Leary was king of such creatures — and they were more typical than untypical of the full-time union official across industry.

They helped prepare the working class defeats inflicted by the Tories. The ruling class should be grateful to them. But Thatcher wanted their scalps.

The ghost of Tim O'Leary has reason to be angry with those who now misrepresent him and his like as firebrands and militants. So have we.

Will there be a revolution in Iraq?

By Jack Cleary

Rebellions against Saddam and against the Ba'athist party are sweeping through Iraq in the wake of Saddam Hussein's military defeat.

Fighting between defenders and opponents of the Ba'ath régime is reported in a dozen cities, mainly in the south. The Kurds in the north-west have armed guerrilla bands, and the weakening by defeat of the central Iraqi state may have opened for them the prospect of victory in their prolonged battle for autonomy or independence.

They may, however, now face opposition — or suffer manipulation — not only from the Iraqi state, but from Turkey, which has its own Kurdish minority and has long laid claim to the Kurdish territory in Iraq.

Saddam's régime is very narrowly based. It is based on the Arab Sunni Muslim population, and even more narrowly, on a network of political gangsters who originate in Saddam Hussein's home village, many of them his relatives. Everyone else has been excluded from power and suffered varying degrees of oppression. Shi'ite Muslims — like those in Iran — may be a majority of the population (no-one knows for sure).

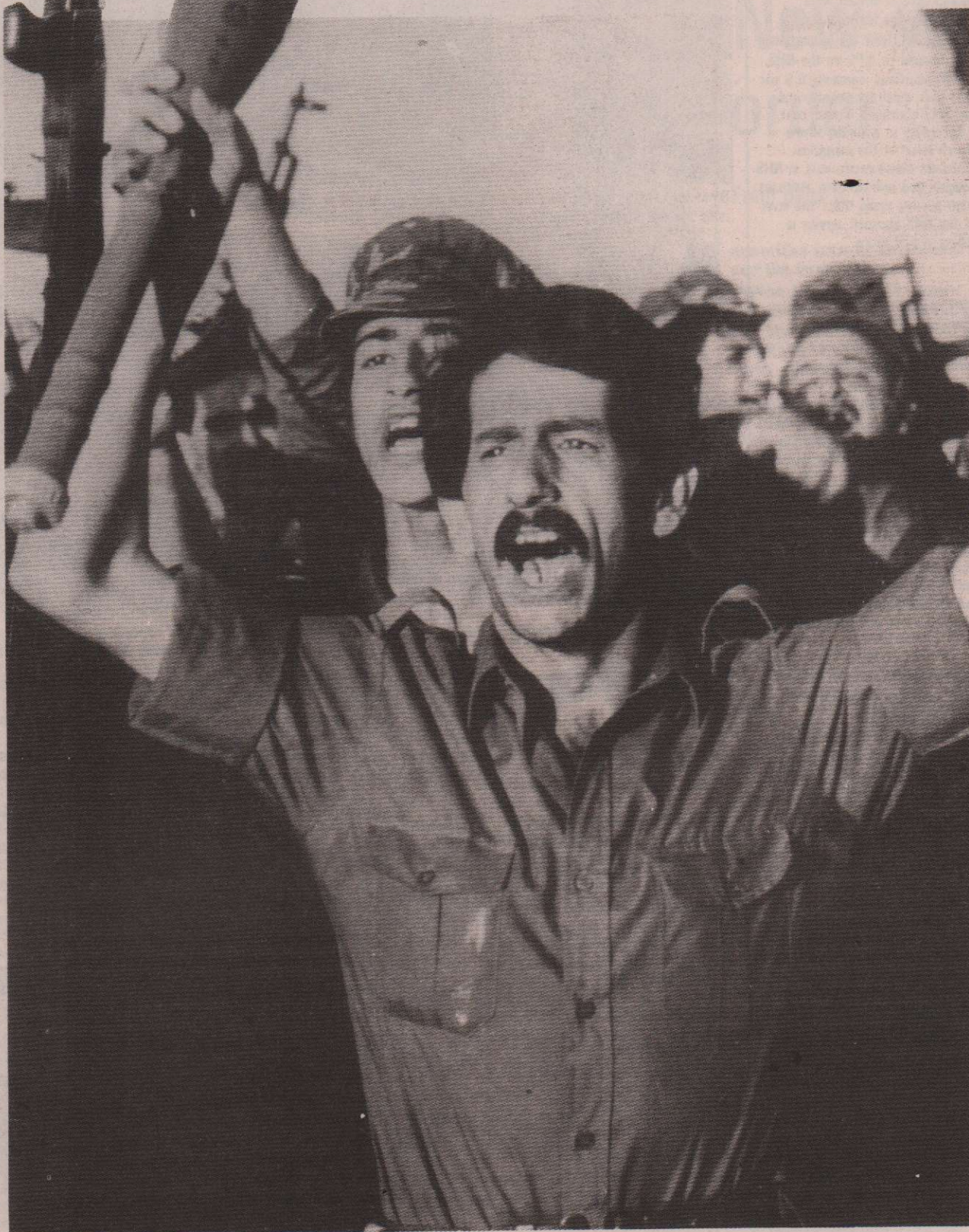
The Saddam-Ba'ath régime has relied on a stark and savage terror against its own people.

Now, Saddam Hussein's defeat and humiliation, and the weakening of his immensely swollen state apparatus of repression is allowing mass popular revolt to well up. In the southern areas they control, the Americans are probably encouraging it as a means of toppling Saddam Hussein.

But it has a momentum of its own, and it has been brewing a long time. It is not something the Americans can hope to control, though they will certainly try to shape it, channel it and use it.

Though information is still sketchy, the problems the Iraqi revolution will face are clear.

A working class or socialist rebellion would face great repression from the American forces of occupation. But as yet we



Before the war: a government orchestrated pro-Saddam demonstration. Now the people are on the streets against him.

are far from that. The Shi'ite forces have links with Iran, and take the vile theocratic republic established there after the 1979 revolution as their model. The establishment of such a republic would, in any conditions, be an immense defeat for the potentially powerful Iraqi working class.

The Iraqi Communist Party has in the past been a great force in the working class. Its politics have led the working class into a grim series of defeats since the '60s.

"The Iraqi working class is fighting to regain the right to think and organise for itself. If it succeeds, there can be a new beginning."

If the main party of the working class in the Iraqi state in the '60s had not been Stalinist, then probably there would not have been a series of

Ba'athist-military dictatorships.

After the 1958 revolution overthrew the British-puppet régime, and shot the young king and his en-

tourage, the working class in the Iraqi state bounded forward. Oil workers organised and were a force to be reckoned with.

There was a loose military régime under General Kassem, heavily dependent on the favour of the mass of the people, and the Communist Party. The working class might have taken power.

But the Communist Party followed the same Stalinist path Communist Parties have followed to disaster in many coun-

tries, beginning with China in the 1920s. It believed that "the bourgeois revolution" had to be completed first, by the bourgeoisie, before the working class could take power. So it supported Kassem, restrained the workers, and dawdled for five years.

In 1963 the American CIA helped the nationalist Ba'athist party and part of the army organise a coup. There followed a great butchery of Communist Party members and working class militants — exactly as there had been — a product of the same Stalinist policies — in China in 1927 and would be two years later in Indonesia, when the CP had also led the working class to dawdle "completing the bourgeois revolution", while the reaction prepared its blows.

Has the Iraqi Communist Party learnt from the experience? The evidence is that it has not. In the late '70s they collaborated with Saddam and then were again repressed. It is possible that some Iraqi CP militants will have learned, and fight for working class politics.

Central to the fate of the democratic forces in Iraq will be the attitude they take to the Kurdish struggle. Democrats and socialists must support the Kurds' right to self-determination.

The strength of the conflicting forces in play may well lead to the Lebanonisation of Iraq — that is its disintegration into a number of sub-states under warlords and sectional régimes — with the US and its allies in the south, and maybe Turkey and Iran too, stirring the pot as Syria and Israel did in the Lebanon.

The Iraqi working class is fighting to regain the right to think and organise for itself. If it succeeds, there can be a new beginning.

When the Iraqi working class really casts off the shackles of the murderous Ba'athist régime, that will be the best news to come out of the Middle East in a long time.

For now, Iraq has only the prospect of Saddam being replaced by a number of smaller, weaker Saddams, more compliant to the US.

TUC was the worst

GRAFFITI

Britain's TUC was the most pro-war trade union federation in Western Europe, according to a survey in the March 1991 issue of the magazine *Labour Research*.

Only the Spanish unions — the Socialist UGT and the Communist-Party-linked CCOO — have denounced the war as "no more than a demonstration of the imperialist character of the United States", but most unions made some sort of protest in favour of a peaceful settlement in the Gulf. The TUC declared "full support for the allied forces".

The biggest union federation in Western Europe, the German DGB, supported demonstrations and called minutes of silence at work to demand a ceasefire.

The Italian union federation — CP, Catholic, and Socialist — likewise backed demonstrations and demanded a ceasefire. The French CGT (CP-linked) was central to the anti-war movement in France, and demanded the withdrawal of French troops from the Gulf.

The other union federation in France, Force Ouvriere and the CFDT (right-wing syndicalist and pro-Socialist, respectively) were equivocal.

FO and some other European union federations not explicitly opposed to the war — like the two Belgian federations — declared their opposition to any attacks on working class living conditions motivated by the war. The TUC did not even do that.

A little-known side of Iraq's ruling Ba'ath party — as international mediator — was revealed last weekend in the *Irish Sunday Press*.

In 1982 the Irish ruling class needed a mediator. Fianna Fail had come out of a general election as the biggest party, but with no clear majority. It needed the support of a smaller party.

The best candidate was the neo-Stalinist, ex-Republican Workers' Party. But Fianna Fail's leaders were not on friendly terms with the Workers' Party's. They needed a go-between.

So they turned to...the Ba'ath party, with which both Fianna Fail

and the WP had international links. The WP duly supplied the votes to enable FF to form a government.

The *Sunday Press* is pro-Fianna Fail, so there is no reason to doubt its story. Until the US decided to turn on Iraq, the Ba'athists were accepted and established figures in international capitalist diplomacy and wheeler-dealing.

In 1985, 47 per cent of abortions in Britain were done by the National Health Service. By 1989 the proportion had dropped to 42% on the NHS.

NHS abortions increased 8.5 per cent over those four years, and non-NHS abortions 31 per cent.

According to a survey in the March issue of the magazine *Labour Research*, cuts in NHS budgets and anti-abortion attitudes from doctors mean that "the level of the NHS abortion service is falling in real terms."

Every household in Britain pays £150 a year to subsidise company cars, according to the environmental group Greenpeace.

Over half of new cars are sold as company cars, many of them essentially as tax-dodging perks for managers. Sales executives get company cars in many countries of Western Europe; but in Britain senior finance executives get company cars too (or 96 per cent of them do), although their job is mostly behind one desk, and in countries like Germany and France equivalent people mostly do not get company cars.

Average real wages have stagnated in the US since the 1970s.

For men with less than four years' high school, however, average real wages went down 12 per cent between 1979 and '87. Men with more than four years' higher education saw their real wages up 10 per cent.

Women's real wages generally did a bit better than men's, increasing 15 per cent for those with more than four years' higher education, and going down four per cent for those with less than four years' high school.



Burnt-out vehicles on the road into Iraq after being destroyed by allied bombing raids against retreating Iraqis

A few honourable exceptions

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Papers as diverse as the *Sun* and the *Guardian* have been playing a peculiarly tasteless and inappropriate little game: drawing up lists of "winners" and "losers" of the Gulf war.

Bush, Schwartzkopf, Major — even Kinnock and Ashdown, all had a "good war". Saddam, Arafat, King Hussein, Tony Benn and Edward Heath all had a "bad war". The population of Baghdad and Kuwait City don't warrant a mention in this amusing little game, of course. Neither do the carbonised conscripts on the road from Kuwait to Basra.

One thing is for sure: few British journalists and no British papers come out of the war with much in the way of honour. The *Sun* and *Star* have been nauseating even by their own putrid standards. The mid-market tabloids rehashed Pentagon propaganda while denouncing the BBC and ITN as stooges of Saddam.

Telegraph editor Max Hastings popped up all over the place, arguing that the "duty" of the press was to "come on side" (ie. suspend all objectivity and criticism) for the duration.

Then there were the more "sophisticated" commentators, with their "reluctant" justifications for the war. People like Hugo Young of the *Guardian*, Michael Ig-

natieff of the *Observer* and the *Independent on Sunday's* Neal Ascherson: they were the "conscience" of the pro-war lobby, serving up one hundred and one liberal platitudes all of which amounted to the old song "We don't want to fight/But by jingo if we do..."

So let it be recorded that there were just a few honourable exceptions to the pro-war chorus in the press.

Three out of the five regular columnists on the *Mirror* opposed the war. Edward Pearce (who joined the *Guardian* from the *Telegraph* last year, amid complaints from *Guardian* readers that he was too right-wing) waged a tenacious anti-war cam-

paign, denouncing allied hypocrisy and reminding us of the real cost of war, beneath the "mortal lawn mower" of the US bombers.

Of the reporters out in the Gulf, Marie Colvin of the *Times* deserves credit for writing truthfully about the Baghdad shelter bombing ("there was no evidence on the ground that this structure had a military purpose") and Robert Fisk of the *Independent* will be remembered for his consistently honest, detailed and moving reports. His despatches from Kuwait continue to be essential reading: last Monday Fisk described how he and Colin Smith of the *Observer* attempted to stop Kuwaiti

soldiers, watched by American troops, beating up a Palestinian boy: "When I asked the American officer why he allowed the Kuwaitis to beat civilians, he replied: 'You having a nice day? We don't want your sort around here with you dirty rumours. You have a big mouth. This is martial law, boy. Fuck off'."

Unfortunately, for every Robert Fisk there were a dozen hacks cooped up in the MoD "pools", toeing the approved "line". And for every Edward Pearce there are two dozen saloon-bar warriors churning out propaganda from their air-conditioned offices in Wapping. They all had a very "good war", of course.



Willis calls the tune. At the GCHO rally our Norman made a request of the band to play *Colonel Bogey* in solidarity with "our boys" in the Gulf

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Analysing events, promoting campaigns

The left press and the test of war

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Martin Thomas

The left press proved its value during the Gulf war by being the only voice of opposition to the unanimous pro-war offensive of the official media.

But a Marxist newspaper should do more than just express opposition. It should analyse, put things into context, present facts and arguments which help its readers form an independent understanding of what happens.

And it should be an *organiser*, helping, for example, to organise the anti-war movement.

Socialist Organiser tried to help clarify and organise anti-war opinion. We argued that the sanctions were a step towards war, not an alternative to it. We said that the quarrel between Iraq and the US over Kuwait was a quarrel between thieves, but the US military build-up aimed far further than Kuwait. It aimed at the crushing of the US's former ally, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

Support for the peoples of Iraq against US assault should not, however, be confused with credence for Saddam Hussein's regime — which was indeed as vile as the warmonger press made it out to be. Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait! we said.

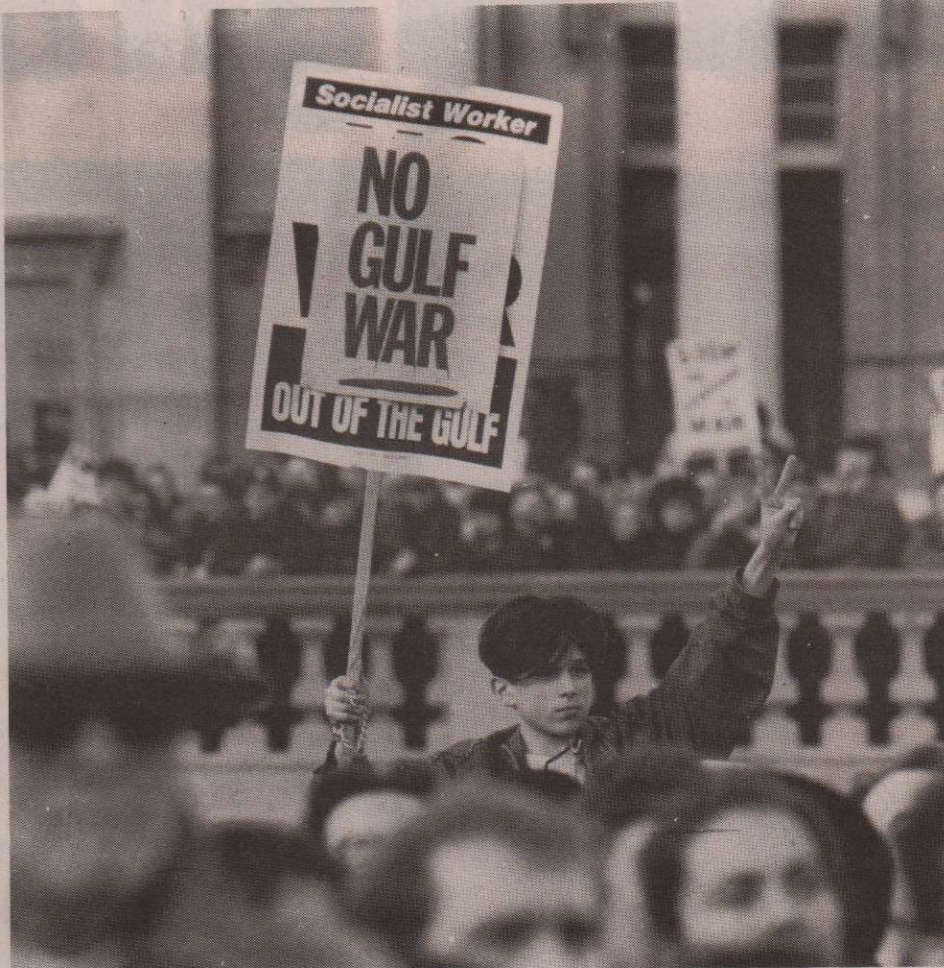
We also debated the issues in the columns of the paper, providing material for readers to make up their own minds.

We argued for and promoted united-front campaigns against the war.

That is the record. How does *Socialist Worker*, the most important of the other left-wing weeklies, compare?

It carried a number of articles explaining quite well what was wrong with the UN and sanctions. Its attitude to Saddam was all over the place.

At first it seemed to take much the same line as *SO*. After all, *SW* had only recently denounced Saddam Hussein as a puppet of US imperialism — so much so that it even supported the murderous Islamic regime in



Over 100,000 marched on 12 January; but could we have had more, earlier, if the left press had been better? Photo: John Harris

Iran against Iraq in the closing stages of the Iran-Iraq war — so it would be hard for it to start calling the same Saddam regime anti-imperialist.

By mid-August it was doing just that. "The more US pressure builds up, the more Saddam will play an anti-imperialist role... In all of this Saddam should have the support of socialists... Socialists must hope that Iraq gives the US a bloody nose and that the US is frustrated in its attempt to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait..." (*SW*, 18 August).

SW was evidently convinced that Saddam's demagoguery represented a powerful anti-imperialist movement which it should support.

In the same vein of rah-rah revolutionary "anti-imperialist" posturing, *SW* started its anti-war agitation by calling its own demonstrations, without regard to any attempts to create a united campaign.

Then it turned around. Without saying it had been wrong, or formally changing its views, it dropped all men-

tion of its support for "anti-imperialist" Saddam. It joined the (pro-sanctions, anti-Troops Out) Committee to Stop War in the Gulf without any word of argument against the Committee's official line, and echoed the Committee's witch-hunt against the (pro-Troops Out) Campaign Against War in the Gulf.

SW was finally rewarded for its political servility with an attempt by the officers of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf to witch-hunt it out of the Committee. Even that provoked no re-think by *SW*, no reassertion of *SW*'s own views, nothing but a bland statement that it was a pity the Committee's officers were so divisive.

In *SW*'s pamphlet on the war, its August line of giving credence to Saddam and his "anti-imperialist" role was re-stated — for form's sake — in one subordinate clause of one sentence, without any supporting argument at all. The Marxist task of thinking things through, worrying out issues, digging deeper than journalistic comment and knee-jerk responses, had been abandoned altogether.

The pro-Saddam line found some practical expression, however. When Iraq attacked civilian targets in Israel with Scud missiles, *SW* did not go as far as cheering it on — though that is certainly the logic of its line that Israel's very right to exist must be denied.

It even carried a critical comment, to the effect that such missile attacks are not really the best way of doing things. But the gist of its coverage was to denounce

any condemnation of the attacks — first by way of denouncing the mainstream media's real hypocrisy, secondly by saying that Israel deserved no sympathy after what it had done to the Palestinians.

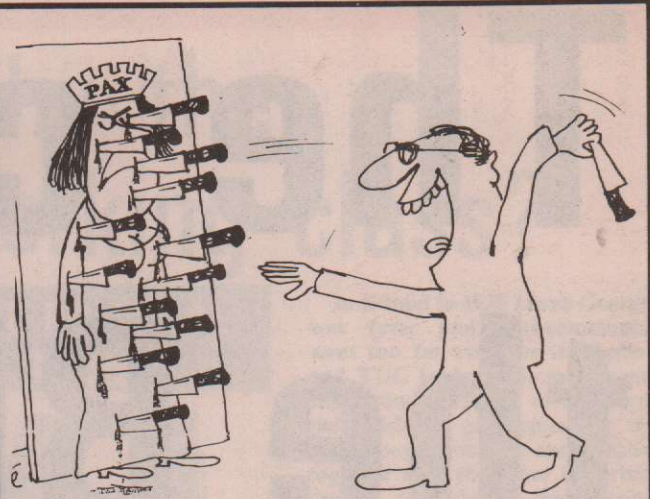
And, on the ground, many *SW* supporters were gleeful about the bombing of Israel, drawing out the logic of *SW*'s politics on this question.

Here as on Iraq *SW* showed itself unable to distinguish between the rights of a nation and political attitudes to the leadership or government of that nation. It was unable to support Iraq's rights against US assault without giving credence to Saddam, unable to denounce Israel's governments without declaring the whole Israeli Jewish people fair game for Iraqi attack.

SW tends to argue in terms of "good" anti-imperialist peoples (Palestinians, Iranians, etc) and "bad" pro-imperialist ones (Israeli Jews, etc). The odd thing in the Gulf crisis, which caused it so much embarrassment, was that Iraq had to be transferred from the category of "pro-imperialist" to "anti-imperialist".

What was wrong with *SW* on the war was not only, and not mainly, its conclusions. It was its way of presenting, or not presenting, its arguments — or its absence of argument.

It did not even make a serious attempt at being what a Marxist newspaper should be, a paper which enlightens its readers, helps them think for themselves, jolts their prejudices, opens their minds to questions they had never thought of before.



Cartoon from the French socialist weekly *Rouge*

New world order

From page 3

minorities such as the Kurds and the Israeli Jews.

The US will be the super-power in the Middle East: but it will still be a Middle East torn by national, social and religious conflicts.

The US will almost certainly retain a sizeable military base in Kuwait, and quite likely bases in southern Iraq too. It will spend billions on arming and propping up whichever regimes — Egypt? Turkey? others? — it makes central to the new system of military alliances and treaties it will set up in the region. It will have to spend similar billions on Israel to maintain the balance.

US arms manufacturers, thrilled by the performance of their death machines, will press the argument for the newest, most sophisticated, and most expensive military technology, with new confidence and new power.

The "imperial overstretch" of the US will get worse. As with many imperial powers before it, the military overheads are already sapping in the economic foundations. The war has already cost many billions. Governments which promised contributions to the cost may well not deliver. The follow-up to the war will cost more.

Already, industrial productivity in the US has been stagnating for years. In some important industries the US has now been clearly outstripped by Japan, and is being hard pressed by Germany. As the US continues to put its investment funds, its scientists, and its research resources into weaponry, as its education system and its social infrastructure continue to rot, it will fall behind economically.

The triumph of US military supremacy in the Gulf will hasten the decline of US economic supremacy. And the loss of economic supremacy will make military supremacy more costly to sustain, and ultimately unsustainable. No stable US-dominated "new world order" is in sight.

The United Nations has functioned as a diplomatic cover and a rubber stamp for the US throughout the Gulf crisis. It has lost, not gained, credibility as an independent arbiter. Having fought the war, the

US will not hand over the task of organising the peace to the UN. If it uses the UN in its attempts to reorder the Middle East, it will only be in the same way as it used it in the Gulf crisis — as a glove-puppet for American power.

"A Middle East peace conference" is advocated by almost everyone, including many anti-war activists. But we can have no illusions in what such a conference can achieve. It will be a forum for a US-managed carve-up of the region. It can be no more.

In Britain, the Tories have undoubtedly gained from the murderous victory in the Gulf.

Labour's "soft left", having protested continuously that they would at long last make a stand against any "extension of the war aims" from the recapture of Kuwait to an attack on Iraq, fell nervously silent as the US-led land invasion of Iraq confirmed that the US war aims had always gone much further than Kuwait.

Indeed, Labour's centre-ground — subservient as always to power and success — shifted somewhat in favour of the war as all their elaborate excuses and evasions were ripped to shreds. As the US-led armies struck deep into Iraq, massacring thousands, voices began to be heard in local Labour Parties not quibbling but openly applauding a "just war".

The anti-war left feels defeated. But it needs to keep campaigning — to expose and hammer home the truth about the murdering hypocrisy of the US-led coalition, and to demand the immediate withdrawal of US and British forces from the region and self-determination for all the peoples of the Middle East.

People who were drawn into politics for the first time by the anti-war movement — or drawn back into politics by it after a period of inactivity — need to take stock, and look at continuing the struggle against the roots of war, against capitalism, for socialism.

The Tories and the Labour right wing are triumphant for now. But the economic slump, the industrial class struggle, the poll tax, are all there. Tens of thousands of people have learned about the hypocrisy and vileness of all "official" politics in Britain. They can and must be organised to continue the fight.

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Is this justice?

The conspiracy to the Birmingham

By Cathy Nugent

The final appeal hearing for the Birmingham Six is now taking place at the Old Bailey. Their innocence is not denied by anyone. The hearing may take one more week: one more week in jail, one more disgusting formality.

Sixteen years ago the six men were convicted of the savage IRA pub bombings in Birmingham. Conviction was based on "confessions" tortured out of them, and on very disputable, maybe fabricated "scientific" evidence.

Hugh Callaghan, Patrick Hill, Gerry Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power and Johnny Walker were given 21 life sentences each. The judge set no limit on the term of their imprisonment. The British state locked them up and threw away the key.

Britain is not Stalin's Russia, but the trials and treatment of these men resembles the arbitrary and brutal punishment meted out in the name of "justice" by an authoritarian state.

For most of their 16 years in jail, these men must have felt that they would not wake up from this nightmare.

They are now waking up. They will be released and compensated — in so far as they can be compensated. Theirs is a terrible story!

On Thursday 21 November 1974 three bombs went off in the centre of Birmingham — two in pubs. 21 people were killed and 162 were injured. Most of

the victims were civilians, many of them were Irish. It appears to have been a confused and bungled IRA operation. By any standards it was a monstrous and senseless attack.

The reaction to the bombings was one of widespread convulsive horror. At British Leyland's Longbridge plant there was a mass walk-out the day after.

Workers carried placards saying "Hang the IRA bombers". In a letter to Chris Mullin MP, quoted in his book, *Error of Judgement*, one of the victims sums up the mood: "I hated all of them, their families and anyone who had anything to do with them. It was many years before I could think objectively about Irish people. My irrational feelings were exactly the mood in which these men were convicted. Normal housewives attacked an Irish man in a local Woolworths. Stones were thrown in an Irish neighbour's window."

The anti-Irish sentiment and hysteria was inflated by the government. The then-Labour (later SDP) Home Secretary Roy Jenkins talked about the immediate re-introduction of the death penalty.

Jenkins told the House of Commons, and everyone else who was listening: "under the present circumstances one could be justified in enabling the police and others to take exceptional measures in order to protect our people from indiscriminate killings."

So the police were given the signal to make a quick arrest (it must be a quick arrest), to use as much violence as "necessary". They had to be seen to be dealing forcefully and competently with the

situation.

But more than this. For the average thick-eared cop, "protecting our people" would translate into an injunction and a license to give someone (any Irish person will do) a kicking.

The British state has shown consistently that it does not know many other ways of handling "the Irish problem".

And so the police found six men they could "fit up", and did the job expected of them. They took five men travelling from Birmingham to Belfast off a train the day after the bombing. Suspicious! They were Irish. Very suspicious!

One phone call sorted it out. One cop spoke to another cop: "we have detained four men at Heysham". The other cop replied, "take them in". (The other two were arrested later).

Three of the six men knew James MacDade, a raw IRA recruit who had blown himself up a week earlier. They were on the way to his funeral. They were schoolfriends. It was a chance to visit family and friends.

None of the men were IRA or Sinn Fein members or even known as politicals to the Special Branch. Essentially the six men were Irish. That was enough. This was their crime. The rest was just a matter of experienced police "jailors" fitting them up.

This is what happened to the arrested Irishmen. They were detained (without cautioning). They were taken to Morecambe, followed swiftly by the press, to whom the police gave out a signal that they had got the guilty men.

All the police top brass from the surrounding area swarmed down to Morecambe and 100 policemen volunteered their services. But they were not required. The police had the man for the job, George Reade, Chief Superintendent of the West Midlands police force.

Reade, who subsequently did a bunk to Australia, and five of his investigative team were armed with revolvers on 22 November. They were very eager to begin the interrogation.

First of all, forensic tests were done. It seems clear Reade regarded this as a formality: "I make no bones about it," he said, "I'd have brought them back [to Birmingham] whatever the forensic tests said."

The Home Office forensic expert who conducted the tests on the men (for traces of nitroglycerine) told the court he was 99% certain the three men who tested positive had been in contact with explosives. Yet this same expert — Frank Skuse — was very uncertain at the Appeal hearing about whether he had conducted the test correctly. Subsequent tests disputed the original findings. But no-one could tell for sure now because all the relevant test documents had gone missing. Where they were, Skuse could not say. Frank Skuse was later compulsorily retired and is apparently a personal friend of George Reade.

Three of the men tested positive and they were singled out first for the extraction of confessions.

Patrick Hill was told he was "covered in gelnignite from head to toe". He was told he would be shot, he would be dumped on the motorway, no-one would ever know. Hill



Joanne Walker, the daughter of Johnny Walker, one of the Birmingham Six, took part in a candlelit vigil outside Wormwood Scrubs, London.

did not confess.

On the way to Birmingham in a police car, his testicles were whipped with the handle of a police truncheon, a cigarette was stubbed out on his bare feet.

Billy Power was also told he would be thrown out of a car. He was pushed up against a window and told he was going to be thrown out. He was beaten senseless and until he was hysterical. He signed a 900-word confession. The police chiefs drank a glass or two to celebrate...

Johnny Walker had his ulcer scar repeatedly thumped. He had an unloaded gun pointed at his head and the trigger pulled. He was made to stand on one leg with his hands on his head. When he lost balance he received a kick in the genitals or on his legs. All of the men were hit, kicked, shoved against walls.

In cells back in Birmingham they were not allowed to sleep. They were ordered to stand up, then ordered to sit down. They were threatened with dogs and with shotguns. Thus did the police get their confessions.

The men were charged and sent to Winson Green prison. Here they were again beaten up by prison officers.

At the trial where the men were convicted the judge (Judge Bridge) summed up for three days. Virtually all of his time was spent knocking down the defence case. It was all set up. It was all a foregone conclu-

sion. Nobody cared!

In 1976 the prison officers at Winson Green who beat the men up were prosecuted privately by their victims. The six used this as a chance to plead their innocence, to prove they had been beaten into making the confessions. The defence solicitors claimed the men had been beaten up before arriving at Winson Green. This anomaly of course went unnoticed.

For 10 years the men rotted in jail. Then in 1985 Chris Mullin MP took up the case for *World in Action*. They found a former police officer to come forward and corroborate the men's charges of police torture.

Mullin examined other evidence as well. In 1987 Douglas Hurd referred the case to the Court of Appeal. None of the new evidence was listened to at all by the judges. Again the bogus, falsified, sham "integrity of the system" was defended at the cost of justice and the liberty of the citizen.

In 1990 the Guildford 4 were released. They too had been convicted on the basis of forced confessions. Now the convictions of the Birmingham Six could be seen for the outrage against justice that they were.

The press have concentrated on two themes in the last week. Firstly, how this "miscarriage of justice" could have happened. And, will it happen again?

that kept Six in jail



"Miscarriage of justice" is an erroneous and meaningless term for what happened. It was meant to happen. This was their justice. This was their system. It is still their system today.

Of course the courts work generally, normally. Legal Aid, though restricted, is provided. Laws are not only made to serve the in-

"Most of the people who conspired to lock them up and who have locked up countless other innocent people still remain in their privileged, powerful positions."

terests of the ruling class, they are also shaped by class struggle. Of course, the police serve not only their own corporate interests or the interests of the state all the time. Ordinary people, in many circumstances, can find some measure of "protection" from the police.

But in "exceptional circumstances" — the IRA bombing offensive, the miners' strike — the normal impartial functions of the police and courts are rolled away. These exceptions show us what the law of bourgeois law is really

have had 16 years ripped out of their lives.

They have been the victims of a criminal police, Home Office, and judicial conspiracy! No other words describe what has been happening to them. Yet most of the people who conspired to lock them up and who have locked up countless other innocent people still remain in their privileged, powerful positions. Policemen who fake evidence, scientists who swear away people's lives on sixth form science level tests, judges who play along with police they know are liars and framing artists, yet play along with them, Home Office officials who turn a blind eye — these are the sort of people who still run the police and judicial system in Britain.

For 16 years the state, its judicial functionaries, its bureaucracies, and its petty-tyrant police servants have systematically ignored, denied, suppressed and — literally — shredded the truth.

At all costs the Birmingham 6 were not to be found innocent. To preserve a belief in the established order — that was their goal. It was a goal to which they were quite willing to make human sacrifices. For former top judge Lord Denning it was — he said it explicitly — a small price to pay. As one of the Appeal Court judges who stopped the Six's prosecution of the police who beat them up, he made this attitude grotesquely clear: "If the six men win [their prosecution] it will mean

that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous.

"That would mean the Home Secretary would either have to recommend they be pardoned or he would have to remit the case to the Court of Appeal. This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: 'it cannot be right that these actions should go any further'."

"Reasons of state" override justice and the right to freedom of the six innocent and tortured men. The massive falling off of public confidence in the police over the last decade or so proves that many "sensible person[s] in the land" believe it is not right that police-state-style policing should go on in Britain while arrogant brutes like Denning sit in judgement to rubber-stamp police frame-ups.

The labour movement must fight for justice, in general, and for our own class. If the Labour Party were for instance, to take up the case of the Tottenham 3, to fight for some democratic controls over the police and to fight against increasing incroachment on the rights of detainees, or any one of those things, then this would go some way towards making right the barbarous treatment these six men received at the hands of the state.

Why the working class?

THE POLITICAL FRONT



By Patrick Murphy

For anti-war campaigners one of the most dispiriting sights is the apparent acceptance, or even enthusiasm, of the working class for war.

Much of this is whipped up by the press. But nationalism is a powerful identity for people whose real day-to-day identity embodies lack of power and status.

Working-class support for war is also stoked up by exploiting fellow-feeling for soldiers drawn from our class. There is a real cutting edge to the idea that support for war is support for "our boys" and opposition (or support for the other side) is the worst kind of treachery.

These depressing observations came to mind when, recently, I heard the idea that "only the working class can stop this war" recited like a dogma, a hollow slogan, at a political meeting. To most people there it seemed to have no grip on reality, yet there is too much truth in the notion to let it be so misrepresented.

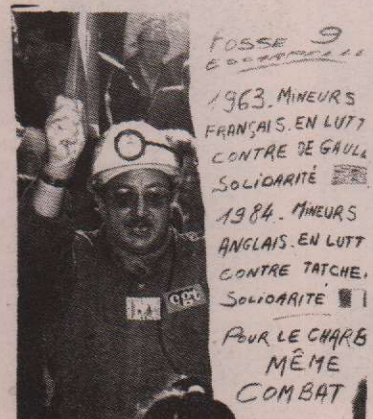
The visible power of capitalism at war disguises a decisive weakness, because our rulers rely utterly upon us during war, even more so than in "normal times".

Between 1914-18 the British Liberal government made a special arrangement with the trade union leaders to grant union recognition, improved pay and conditions, in return for a promise of total co-operation during the war.

Unions were suddenly a vital part of society in the eyes of people who had previously seen them as sworn enemies and a threat to order and stability. Arthur Henderson became the first Labour Cabinet Minister in Asquith's coalition in 1916. Lloyd George infuriated politicians by announcing his war aims to the TUC before speaking to the Commons as the war ended.

The shame is that union leaders used the war to accept this promotion rather than to oppose and defeat the slaughter of their fellow workers. The evidence is clear, however, and it shows that the labour movement could prevent or halt wars.

The Russian workers in 1917 crippled the war effort of the Tsar and later Kerensky.



Workers of all lands. unite!

In Britain in 1920 Lloyd George's war fever and anti-communism went too far even for the Labour and TUC leaders. He was eagerly supporting attempts to overthrow the Bolshevik government by sending troops, weapons and supplies, together with the other imperialist armies, to fight in the so-called Wars of Intervention. London dockers refused to load a ship, the Jolly George, which was to carry weapons for this war. The TUC and Labour Party then threatened a general strike. That ended Britain's role in that war.

So the short-term jingoism we come to expect is not fixed or permanent. It can be changed by a labour movement which challenges it and leads opposition.

And only the working class can bring down the system that causes war.

The working class is uniquely anti-capitalist — it is anti-capitalist in a unique way.

Many individuals, from many backgrounds, choose to oppose wars and capitalism through conviction; they make a good or bad job of it, sometimes giving their lives to the struggle, too often giving up in frustration. The working class fights capitalism often regardless of choice, or will, or understanding of that system.

The job of socialists is to make the workers' movement fully aware that freedom for our class and the continuation of production based on profit, controlled by a tiny few, are incompatible aims. The point here, however, is that workers, even the distorted and bought-off labour leaders, fight capitalism regardless of their initial intentions and political will. A good example is the confusing story of modern Eastern Europe.

Workers in Poland, East Germany, and Hungary are ideologically in favour of capitalism. They believe that the market offers the lifestyle and wealth in consumer goods denied to them by Stalinism. They vote and march for pro-capitalist politicians.

Every news bulletin from Poland tells us, on the other hand, that workers are threatening to strike against unemployment, cuts in wages and welfare provision caused by the switch to a free market. Even when enthusiastically pro-market in ideas, the working class, because of its place in society, is anti-capitalist in spirit, it has a built-in anti-capitalist dynamic.

No socialism is possible if it is to be made only by conscious, politically aware volunteers who remain aloof from the existing working-class movement for fear of being contaminated. Such people remain aloof from the only force that can change society, for fear it might first change them.

The labour movement could have transformed the anti-war movement into a movement that could have ended the war and defeated imperialism. As it is, war against Iraq and other Arab people by the West and her regional allies has not been ended.

Equally, the opposition to war, especially amongst the young, could be a tremendous force for transforming a politically lifeless labour movement. A serious, sizeable socialist organisation embedded in the workers' movement could still fuse the gut anger of radicals with the latent power of labour to wage the only war worth fighting, "the mother of all battles" — the class war.

Israeli socialists speak out on:

The war, Israel and the Palestinians

Part two of a document on the Gulf crisis from the Israeli socialist organisation Matzpen

Why does the Iraqi regime not withdraw from Kuwait, now that the concentrated military power is directed against her?

Although the speakers of the coalition have tried to picture Saddam Hussein as a blood-thirsty monster, his unwillingness to withdraw and surrender — at least until now — has to be explained by the fact that the character and aims of this war are not decided upon in Baghdad, but in Washington.

The United States has left Iraq with no other option but to fight until the last drop of blood. From the moment it became evident that the coalition wanted Saddam's head or — in more political words — the elimination of his regime's power, every ruler would have behaved just as he does, i.e. to resist as long as he can, and for any price.

Maybe (and this is only a hypothesis) the Iraqi regime thought that the coalition would concentrate its military power to liberate Kuwait already at the outset of the war. In that case Saddam Hussein could have excelled in the eyes of his people and in front of the Arab masses as the one who fought against Kuwait and lost with honour. However, from the moment the military campaign focused on Iraq, the message became clear: the coalition wants to destroy the Iraqi regime and its leader, and it will not stop until this task is completed. In this sense, the coalition carries the full responsibility for the dimensions of this war and its extension beyond the borders of Iraq and Kuwait.

The bombing of population centres in Israel and Saudi Arabia, the spilling of oil into the Gulf, the digging in of the Iraqi army and Saddam Hussein's apocalyptic declarations, are part of the battle of a regime and its leader who are fighting for their survival. Even if we understand that Saddam Hussein's actions are actions of desperation, it is clear that he will continue to behave like a wounded lion struggling for his life, as long as the United States will proceed to implement her war aims in the battlefield and in the media, and as such he will want to wound and hurt whoever is in his reach.

Does this imply that the missile attacks against Israel are justified?

Just as there is no justification for the destruction of Iraq, and for the catastrophe occurring to the Iraqi people, including loss of lives, refugees, and the demolition of the civil infrastructure of the state, so there is no justification for death and destruction caused by the Scud missiles in Tel Aviv or Haifa. Israeli civilians, just like the Iraqi population, are a victim of this war.

If the Iraqi regime regards the emission of missiles on Israel as a justified military action, it is not because Saddam Hussein is crazy, but because there is a strong historical link between the role of the Israeli state in the region and US imperialism.

Even if we understand that the Iraqi regime attempts to draw Israel into war in order to undermine the coalition, and not to "liberate Palestine", it remains true that this political manipulation is possible only on the basis of the unique role Israel has been playing in the region since its establishment. Israel, together with the western states, participated actively in the 1956 war, which aimed to strike at Jamal Abdel Nasser's regime following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. Israel has been holding onto Arab territories occupied in 1967 for now more than 20 years, she brutally represses the Palestinian people, and refuses to sign any human rights declaration or any agreement concerning nuclear disarmament of the region.

According to western sources, Israel is in possession of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Israel is developing ballistic missiles, and entertains one of the biggest and most sophisticated systems of land and air forces.

Israel has an agreement of strategic cooperation with the United States which resembles the agreement between the NATO states. This cooperation finds its expression in the field of intelligence as well as on the level of the armed forces (eg. provision of supplies to the US plane carriers in the Mediterranean Sea).

Israel insists on her sole right to eliminate any nuclear threat in the region — as she did for example in the 1980 bombing of the Iraqi powerplant — but refuses to be controlled by international commissions set up to prevent the distribution of nuclear weapons.

Israel conquered an Arab capital, Beirut, and tried with US support to establish a regime to her taste.

These examples leave no doubt that Israel is serving the imperialist interests in the region, thereby conveying a permanent threat to the Arab countries.

The United States regards Israel as a military fortress, always ready and prepared to strike out in favour of western interests, either to stop unwanted developments among the Arab masses, or to prevent the Arab regimes from upsetting the balance of power in the region.

Although Israel is not actively involved in the present war, she performs in a passive way, a central role in the United States' policy aiming to establish a new order in the region, once Saddam Hussein's regime is destroyed.

The fact that Israel has not yet responded to the missile attacks on its population centres cannot be explained by considerations



Devastation in Baghdad

given to the needs of the coalition, but it has to be seen first of all as a result of clear orders given by Washington. In this sense, Israel is a US mercenary: acting whenever she is needed, and paralysed when unwanted.

If Israel is really not interested in being involved in a war in the region which, on first sight, does not concern her, she has to act towards a solution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, towards a peace settlement with the Arab states, for the disarmament of the region from non-conventional weapons, to declare her neutrality in international conflicts, etc; in other words, she has to change her political and military leaders.

The context described above explains why, although the missiles are emitted by Iraq, the Israeli government and its partners in the

"The coalition wants to destroy the Iraqi regime and its leader, and will not stop until this task is completed."

"opposition" carry part of the responsibility for the victims in the country. It is enough to listen to Shlomo Lahat (Tel Aviv mayor) or to Yossi Sarid (Civil Rights Movement) calling Tel Aviv residents "deserters" or "non-Jews" (because they leave the city in fear), in order to understand that to the politicians of the Zionist parties, the country's population is no more than cheap cannon-fodder in the framework of the strategic cooperation with the United States.

Here we have to add that in spite of the euphoria of national unity, and in the very days that the population of Gush Dan is suffering, the Israeli government and leading industrialists are passing a state budget which contains major cutbacks in the standard of living, and announcing that workers will not receive their salaries if they stay away from work because of the bombings. Suddenly it also becomes clear that, although we are "all one people", the income tax authorities know well how to distinguish between rich and poor, and that compensations paid for war damage will not be sufficient to re-build homes or to purchase lost property. Also here, Shlomo Lahat, in brutishness characteristic for him, knew to make it clear

to the residents of Hatikva Neighbourhood (poor Tel Aviv quarter) that even if they find themselves in the frontline of the present battle, the attitude towards them will not change: he decided not to distribute compensations individually, because we all know that in Hatikva Neighbourhood "they will spend the money on drugs".

This despising attitude only supports the claim that there is a wide gap between the interests of the majority of the population in Israel, workers and residents of the poor neighbourhoods, and those of the politicians of right and left, capital owners and IDF generals. The Jewish masses in this country have the basic interest to live in peace and stop paying the blood-price; the Israeli ruling class is interested in consolidating more and more the Israeli army-machine, to continue to function as the small partner of US interests, i.e. to continue to live with the Israeli-Arab conflict in general, and with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically.

Are these the factors explaining the joy expressed by the Palestinians in the occupied territories after each missile attack on Tel Aviv, and the PLO support for Iraq?

Here we have to distinguish between the joy expressed by the Palestinian residents and the political position taken by the Palestinian national movement.

Concerning the first, the explanation is simple, even if many Israeli activists against the occupation will not like it. Israelis easily forget the responsibility of their government and security forces for what is done in these territories. It is enough here to remember the thousands killed during the three years of the Intifada, the thousands wounded and arrested, the curfew imposed now already for more than two weeks, the humiliations and the violations of basic human rights, in order to understand that every missile-blow on Israel is welcomed and happily received by the Palestinians. Maybe this is infantile behaviour, but as long as the majority of the Jewish population supports the policy of the Israeli government, we should not be surprised by this attitude.

Concerning the PLO and the national movement, their support for Iraq is based on a sound political decision. The Palestinian



Arafat



there unbearable. This is clearly a policy of intentional starvation!

At the same time, the policy of wild incitement against the Arab population continues in order to justify acts of revenge and punishment later on. The arrest of Sari Nusseibeh, under the pretext of espionage in favour of Iraq, is an act which uncovers the intentions of the occupation authorities; according to the state of Israel, all Palestinians are spies of Saddam Hussein, and under conditions of war, any form of punishment and repression of spies is justified.

If the protest movement does not want to take part in these crimes we have to step up the struggle now, without hesitation, and raise the following demands:

- Lift the curfew immediately! Stop the policy of starvation!
- Free Sari Nusseibeh and all administrative detainees!
- Stop the incitement against the Arab population on both sides of the green line!

Which steps will bring peace to our region?

We do not want to create illusions. Real peace in our region can only be achieved on the basis of far-reaching changes:

As long as imperialism governs the region, whether directly or indirectly by means of regimes sharing its projects (Israel and Arab states), the danger of new outbursts of conflicts will remain.

The necessary changes will not be brought about by external forces, but by the majority of the masses and the progressive forces in the region. The overthrow of the Iraqi regime must be an act performed by the Iraqi people itself. The exchange of the Israeli government has to be the result of joint efforts of the Israeli and Palestinian people.

The complete disarmament of our region from all non-conventional weapons has to be the first step towards the reduction of the standing troops.

The natural resources of the region have to contribute to the prosperity and welfare of the people living in the region, and not to the profits of imperialist companies, or a few rich families.

And what about our immediate solutions?

Our answers are:

- Stop the battles in the Gulf; immediate withdrawal of the foreign troops from the region;
- For an immediate agreement concerning the disarmament of the region from non-conventional weapons;
- Negotiations between the Arab states on the solution of the Kuwaiti question;
- Immediate Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967;
- Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for the realisation of the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination.

Let us not become collaborators in this war for oil, because the price we will have to pay will be heavier than Scud missiles!

people have learnt through bitter experience that to trust in the American will to "pressure" the Israelis — as a consequence of pressure coming from various Arab states — into solving the Palestinian question is equivalent to committing suicide. Since 1948 and until the present war, there has not been any significant change in the United States' attitude towards the Palestinian question, and in her unconditional support for Israel.

True, there are many illusions and much acquiescence to Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime in the national movement, and this may add to the frustration following his probable defeat.

However, as explained above, the political decision taken by the national movement, besides Iraq against the American aggression, is correct even if the outcome of the battle is known beforehand. Every victory of imperialism in the region automatically strengthens Israel, and is equivalent to the defeat of the Palestinian national movement. And already, today, we can see some practical result of this process on the diplomatic level: the growing sympathy for Israel, the promises for raises in aid given by the United States and Germany, and the isolation of the PLO, are only a few examples.

Somebody might ask: maybe there is a justification for an anti-imperialist position, but if the United States will not eliminate Saddam Hussein, we will have to continue suffering from the danger of Iraqi missiles?

Whoever is willing today, because of Iraqi missiles, to acknowledge the right of imperialism to make order in the region, will have to accept tomorrow that the United States will turn another regime into a regional power, to "eliminate" a new problem.

Whoever trusts in the United States' friendship with Israel forgets that imperialist interests in the region will dictate who will be a friend and who an enemy, and whether the friend of today will become the enemy of tomorrow. The "common fate" shared by the United States and Israel may — under different relations of power — turn into a danger for the very survival of the Israeli population.

The illusion that Saddam Hussein's

elimination means the elimination of the missiles is a dangerous one, because of the facts cited above: Saddam Hussein's regime is the fruit of western interest; and the West might in the near future create another Saddam Hussein in the region.

Our region has suffered many wars due to the United States' and her local allies' interests. And the elimination of the Iraqi missiles is not what is going to bring peace and quiet to the region.

The most realistic and most pragmatic solution is the *immediate* stop of the battles in the Gulf, and the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the allied troops from the regime. These are the minimal preconditions which can justify a halt to the Iraqi missile attacks and prepare the ground for regional negotiations.

Is it necessary to continue the struggle against the occupation when public attention is focusing on the question of the Gulf war?

Whether peace or war, it is the duty of the protest movement activists to continue to struggle against occupation. The Israeli national consensus claims that whenever the cannons roar, we have to keep silent. There is no mistake greater than this one. The present Israeli government, just like the preceding one, is using this argument in order to silence any form of struggle for changes in Israeli society, whether concerning the question of occupation and the various questions of democracy, or concerning social issues.

To surrender the right to struggle means to surrender to the present government, in all the political questions which are part of the controversy. The government is not waiting for the end of the battles in order to implement its projects concerning the Palestinian question and social questions. In these moments, the government is trying to strangle the Palestinian masses' struggle in the occupied territories by means of a prolonged curfew, aimed at lowering the standard of living to a degree which will make life



Israeli victim of Scud attack holds part of the missile that destroyed her home

THE CULTURAL FRONT

Lady Chatterley trial highlights lessons for left about censorship

When censors ruled

Trials of freedom



During the '50s British films moved closer to reality — depicting sex, cynicism, etc. This is a scene from *Room at the Top*, with Lawrence Harvey and Simone signoret. This realism was to shock the establishment



Sunday before the war

Whitechapel, East London, 13 January 1991

Rattling, clattering, reverberating echoes roar
And bounce along the streets outside the hospital,
Big swirling blades appear on its high flat brow;
Near Whitechapel Road this cold bright Sunday morning
The engines of mercy test their wings for war:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — Warning!

See the maimed, the coffined, blind and mad returning:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

Below, a sleek content street-trading man
Lays out fresh flowers for the visiting hour.

Soon oil-fields, cities, seas, and babies will be burning:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

From the car park market gleaning what they can,
Two well-dressed women hurry to the tube
Humping high-backed kitchen chairs home to the nest:
Is it the cold, or are others too depressed?

See the maimed, the coffined, blind and mad returning:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

Named for its benefactor, "Saddam Hussein"
The gilded white-walled mosque is sullen, scorning,
Fixed in the skein, balancing loss with gain,
Outshouted by the chattering blades that fly:
Arcane, well-muffled Bangladeshis hurry by.

And suspect alien brown-skinned men
interning, scorning.
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

Behind mad ripper Jack's wrecked lanes, they sell:
Here, mapping out a place in the market arcadia
Ragged men lay trash for sale down on footpaths;
Bare stalls sell rusted tools, old clothes, old nails:
Junk they sell from old folk's lairs, bequests
Of wealth from those despoiled and dispossessed,
Last riches from the life-long near-distressed,
All teapots, vinyl, lamps, big radios — dust-scored
Lives rendered down, spread out on broken boards.

See the maimed, the coffined, blind and mad returning:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

Wholly dispossessed, the lost, mad, ruined
Drunkards, shelter by the station — junked freight,
Obsolete! There, neat on a vendor's stall,
stacked hate-
Filled jingo prints, flash portraits of a wounded
Bourgeois soul: its parody — its aureole!

And high above the whoring propagandists
cold suborning
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing. Warning.

On Whitechapel Road this frost-bright Sunday morning
Cold, covenend drunks look up on spinning blades
And see the high, big, noisy renegade
Engines of mercy test their wings for war
— Mercy for their own; mercy after, not before:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

Soon oilfields, cities, seas and babies will be burning:
Helicopters are on the roof, rehearsing — warning!

Sean Matgamna

The belief in freedom of speech and writing and in wide tolerance for views you detest was long something which defined the left as against the traditional conservative right. With it, inescapably, went opposition to censorship and to the use of force to repress or regiment opinion. Stretching back over hundreds of years to the English Civil War of the 1640s, and earlier, the great causes and fights through which the best bourgeois democratic freedoms were won — of conscience, science, press, assembly, organisation and utterance — were all in the main left wing causes. They were won by the contemporary left with word and deed.

Our contemporary left, however, and especially the would-be revolutionary and Marxist left, is today frequently to be found in the vanguard of the intolerant banners, stiflers, "no-platformers" and bigots. It has become part of the general culture of the left that you try to ban those you don't like.

There are a number of reasons for this. Good reasons: in the first place the spirit which flows from recognition that the class struggle isn't a gentle debate, either in parliament or the trade union negotiating rooms, but a conflict. In particular, there is recognition that the proper response to National Front racist thugs chanting abuse at black people is not to try sweet reason with them.

There are bad reasons: the "struggle" spirit is taken into debates within the left and into arguments both about nuances and even about facts. Views — and even facts — you don't like are to be shunned, stifled and banned. Everyone on the left knows how easy it is to get yourself tagged as a "racist" or "sexist" or "anti-Irish chauvinist" — normally by emotional people using such labels as crude weapons of intimidation.

For example, to question the broad left's attitude to the Middle East, or, for South Africa, to dare to disagree with, or reject, the ANC, or, for Ireland, to repudiate the Provisional IRA, is to get yourself denounced as a "racist" or a "pro-imperialist".

These are all examples taken from SO's collective experience. They testify to a left-wing condition in which emotion takes the place of reason, crude guilt takes the place of argument, and, in general, the left itself has on many questions taken up the traditional place of the old conservative right wing.

Even when it is a matter of literary censorship, opposition to it can no longer be read off and taken for granted from general left-wing opinions. The spirit of Stalinism is still abroad on the left — even amongst anti-Stalinists.

In this account of a famous court case, that in which Penguin Books won the right to publish DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Mark Osborn shows how very recent a thing it is for Britain not to have crude literary censorship — 30 years and less.

The year is 1960. Penguin Books is on trial at the Old Bailey for an attempt to publish *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the DH Lawrence novel.

Lawrence has been dead for 30 years and the book is on sale in most countries outside the Commonwealth. But this is the first attempt to produce an unexpurgated version in Britain.

The case against Penguin had been brought as a test under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act (OPA).

Britain has a long record of censorship and book banning. The Victorian judges were able to ban Flaubert and Zola — they contained passages which aroused "libidinous and lustful desires" and were condemned as "obscene".

One thousand copies of DH Lawrence's *The Rainbow* were destroyed in 1915. The police removed some of his paintings from display in 1929 because pubic hairs could be seen.

Lawrence hit out at "the shadow of the grey elderly ones who belong to the last century, the eunuch century, the century of the mealy-mouthed lie".

Lawrence's target was the Director of Public Prosecutions who had described Freud's work as "filth" and threatened his publishers with prosecution unless circulation was reduced to doctors who were prepared to hand in their names and addresses.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* was banned for a time. Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness*, a novel about lesbianism, was banned for one line: "and that night they were not divided" — with the justification that the book glorified the "horrible tendencies of lesbianism".

Cyril Connolly, Lawrence Durrell, and Henry Miller were all banned before and after the war.

There was always a big element of class discrimination in that the only people who could

read banned books were those who were rich enough to afford foreign travel. One of Penguin's crimes in the eyes of the British state was to plan to publish 200,000 copies of *Lady Chatterley* at a price working class readers could afford.

It all came out in the *Lady Chatterley* court case: ignorance, class prejudice, sexism and sex stereotypes — in the comments of the judge and the prosecution.

The prosecutor tells the jury, which includes three women, that they will have to decide if "*Lady Chatterley* depraves and corrupts". He asks them if this is a book they would "wish their wives or servants to read"!

"The tide can be turned back too. In the US a big part of the reactionary tide has been made up of an unholy alliance of feminists and fundamentalist Christians."

The prosecution lists the various quantities of rude words in the book. Interestingly enough, "arse" is mentioned six times.

But what really bothers the prosecution is that *Lady Chatterley* contains lots of sex: 30 pages out of 300. Do you know what they thought wrong about sex? Quite a lot of it happens outside Lady Chatterley's bedroom! Lady Chatterley and her lover, a gamekeeper and a servant, have sex in his cottage, a boarding house and even in the woods. Just remember that next time you are pulling bits of grass out of your hair and underwear.

The prosecution was faced

with dozens of expert witnesses — all of whom said that the book was good or very good. So they changed tack. They decided to put the fictional character of Lady Chatterley on trial. Her crime? Being an adulterous woman, upper class too, and enjoying sex with a servant! And as the judge helpfully pointed out, the book does not even see them punished.

The jury disagreed with the judge. *Lady Chatterley* was legally published and sold three million copies in three months.

The fight against the thought police went on through the '60s and '70s. Juries became younger and more working class after 1972 when the age of jury service was reduced to 18, and property qualifications were abolished. Also, attitudes had changed. Juries were less likely to convict. By the end of the '70s the censors were not getting their way under the OPA.

Last Exit from Brooklyn, which dealt with homosexuality, was prosecuted in 1968 (and allowed publication). It was as late as 1969 that strict censorship ended in the theatre. There was the *Oz* magazine trial of 1971, the *Gay News* sex and blasphemy trials a decade ago.

There will be others.

The tide can be turned back, too. In the US a big part of the reactionary tide has been made up of an unholy alliance of feminists and fundamentalist Christians.

The left is unclear as to its principles. As the British left is now it may find itself playing the role of cannon fodder for a general reaction.

Clare Short puts a bill to ban Page 3. The SWP have supported bans on Jewish societies for "Zionism". The Union of Jewish Students supports the banning of the "anti-Zionist" *Return* magazine. The Militant side with the Stalinist Rumanian state when it suppresses "right-wing" demonstrators.

All this is wrong in principle and counter-productive too.



Sean Connery and Michelle Pfeiffer up to their neck in romance, in *The Russia House*

The case of the wrong prints



Down these mean streets

By Mick Ackersley

Robert B Parker was guaranteed a million dollars for writing *Poodle Springs*. For, though it is published as a joint work by Parker and Raymond Chandler, it is Robert B Parker's work.

Only a few pages of a projected novel with the working title of *The Poodle Springs Story* had been drafted by Chandler, who died in 1959. From there, Parker, his publisher, and Chandler's heirs have gone on to conjure up the goldmine of a "new Chandler novel", one third of a century after the old master's death.

Nice work if you can get it! In fact, it is a disappointing, rather flaccid effort. It is written in a lighter version of Chandler's much-imitated style. Lots of people do it. Parker, who has the Chandler co-by-line to ensure him a warmer welcome, doesn't do it all that well.

The thing has the feel to it of a technically competent TV pastiche. This Philip Marlowe lacks gravitas, his estrangement from the society around him and its values is not something really felt — as I think Chandler felt it — but a pose to help him make out all the better in that society. Chandler benignly left Marlowe married to "a woman with 10 million dollars". From this situation Parker produces much palaver about Marlowe's "integrity" — this too is unconvincing TV reprise stuff, and I didn't care.

An author has something unique, like his smell or genetic "fingerprint" — voice, personality, I suppose.

Chandler's is very distinctive, an odd mix of real disgust with the "mean streets" his hero must go down and a weirdly located romantic yearning. And other yearnings which slant his viewpoint, like the unmistakably — though probably for Chandler unconscious — erotic element in his attitude to some of the male characters.

There is a person there, and a filtered experience of the world, and it makes his work worthwhile. Miles above "pulp" anyway.

With Robert B Parker — whose *Spencer* books I read until they began to cloy — you have the consciousness of a mimicking former English teacher on the make... It's a bad case of the wrong prints.

Poodle Springs by Raymond Chandler and Robert B Parker, Futura, £3.99

Fumbling the ideas

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *The Russia House*

There are one or two good ideas in *The Russia House* but filmmaker Fred Schepisi fumbles them, then lets them drop.

This spy thriller, set in the Gor-

bachev era, is trying to say too much. It ends up saying nothing.

A Russian physicist, Dante, wants to pass weapons secrets to the West. His Russian intermediary, Katya (Michelle Pfeiffer), tries to pass the stuff to English publisher Barley Blair (Sean Connery), whom Dante had met in Russia, but the notebooks fall into the hands of British Intelligence, when then try to recruit Blair to spy for them.

Barley is at first unwilling, but once he's met (and fallen in love with) Katya, he's in it up to his neck.

What's new in the film is the spy

establishment's reluctance to touch the Dante material, which is one long catalogue of Soviet weapons failure.

Instead of swooping joyfully on the material, the spies, especially the CIA boys, are nonplussed. Their jobs, and the lucrative arms contracts their politicians vie for, will be threatened by reports of Russian incompetence.

Glasnost era or no, the Americans need a credible enemy; an enemy is an economic necessity to their defence-fuelled economy. The military-industrial complex must not be put at risk. The

Americans having tried for years to beat the Russians and tear them down, now find themselves anxious to build them up.

Sadly, this idea, promising as it is, is soon dropped, and the story lurches into more predictable cloak and dagger stuff. The focus switches back and forth between Barley and Katya in Russia and the anxious spies at home, listening in, wondering, plotting, planning.

This is a mistake. Watching people wait has never made for riveting cinema, and when we care little (as we do) for the spies' concerns, the effect is exacerbated. The tension between the Americans and the British (two sets of cardboard cut-outs) just seems tired. What's urgent for them is a yawn for us; we've seen it before.

The Barley/Katya stuff is more interesting, but not quite interesting enough. We know they're in love because the film tells us so, but the bond between them doesn't come across. It's just a given, something that has to happen to keep the movie going.

The worst character is Dante, a standard movie Russian with a tortured soul, downing vodka and muttering dark thoughts. He barely exists.

The film is based on John Le Carre's novel, which critics were eager to dissect as the first spy novel of the Gorbachev era. Would Gorbachev have made the world of spies redundant, they wondered. What was left? Could one justify spying in this supposed new world order?

The book (and the film) answers an emphatic yes. By the end, the spies have got over their nervous fits. Dodgy Russian rockets or not, it's business as usual.

That's not much of a message to take away from a movie, and Schepisi seems to know it. Instead of dead-end cynicism, we get hearts and flowers instead to send us home with a smile on our faces.

The best part of the movie is the scenery shots of Moscow and Leningrad. The onion-skin domes, painted in golds and blues, the gracious eighteenth century architecture, the Leningrad waterways and gardens are all more interesting than the plot.

This is one of the first Western films cleared for shooting in Russia. What a shame Schepisi didn't make a travelogue instead.

If men played netball...

Television

By Jean Lane

There used to be a young woman in my old town who, on walking into her local, would put the price of a game of pool on the side of the table and wait her turn.

The tradition was that anyone who wanted to play went up to the table in order of putting their money down and played against whoever was on and winning at the time. You came off the table when you were defeated.

This woman, once on, stayed on all night. She was brilliant, and all the other players — all men — breathed a sigh of relief when she decided to call it a night.

What I want to know is why isn't she on TV in a penguin suit and a specially adapted pair of specs parading her talents to the world? Is it because she — and all other capable women — don't want to take it to that level of competitiveness? Is it because she hasn't been spotted by the people who can take her there? Or is it because TV sport is male-dominated?

If men played netball would it get no TV viewing? And if women played football, would it be Britain's national game with primetime and extensive TV coverage?

The thing is that women do play football. And it doesn't get the

coverage. Women play football, snooker, golf, rugby and cricket. But as far as TV is concerned only men do these things while women do tennis, gymnastics, athletics, very, very occasionally race a horse but more often do show jumping and dressage.

How is it possible that we can have the technology to bring the world to our living rooms then let it present such a distorted picture?

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that society's view of what women can do is distorted even before it gets near a telly. Telly increases a distortion that already exists rather than creates it.

Watching one of children's TV programmes over the weekend I was astonished to see organised

games which included, for the boys, digging for gold in mud pits, while for the girls, diving into vats of washing to find clothes of a particular colour. When one game involved both boys and girls at the same time driving around in cars, the compere could not resist a comment about women drivers!

Children who watch this stuff all over the country could be forgiven for thinking that girls, soon to be young women, can't do certain things — because they are girls.

Despite this handicap, women do participate in all the sport which TV coverage would have us believe to be "male". But as far as viewing sportswomen is concerned, we will have to wait for Wimbledon to come round again.



Women do athletics and many other sports besides



The role of *Socialist Action* in the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf was explained by Martin Thomas in *SO* 477.

What's the difference?

As someone actively opposed to the Gulf war, I was interested to read Martin Thomas's article on the "Weird History of Socialist Action".

Thomas makes the distinction between the followers of John Ross who now form

Socialist Action and the "traditional opposition" to his ideas who now form *Socialist Outlook*.

I'm not so sure that this is a valid distinction however.

After all, the English language magazine of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, *International ViewPoint*, still prints articles from both *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook* without distinction. And I believe that the USFI's position is that these two groups should reunite since there are no significant political differences between them.

One is tempted to ask, does anybody care? But after *Socialist Action's* activities on the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, perhaps we should.

Joe Lane

Israel must be smashed

If proof were needed that *SO's* position on the Israel/Palestine dispute is reactionary, the last few months have been just that. Last week's *SO* equated self-determination for the Palestinian people with Israel's right to exist. It is exactly the existence of Israel that precludes a Palestinian homeland. In the aftermath of the im-

perialist victory in the Gulf war, the nature of the Zionist state becomes even more explicit. Israel is now strengthened, and supported by the West it will play its traditional role of being a bridgehead for imperialism. No doubt it will maintain its oppression of the West Bank and Gaza. This shows that *SO's* line that can be afforded rights is plainly false. Israel is an expansionist, ir-

reformable racist state. The socialist and democratic answer is a non-religious, ie. secular, state across the whole of occupied Palestine with equal rights for Jews and Arabs alike. Finally, it is the duty to make solidarity with the Palestinians, something that *SO* has failed to do for many years.

Jon Anderson
Accrington, Lancs

Did time stand still in 1973?

What planet has Jean Lane been living on these last two decades?

Can she really have written: "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."

So Billy Bragg never got *Which side are you on?* into the charts during the miners' strike. Steel Pulse never call-

ed on us to *Hunt the National Front*. UB40 never attacked unemployment, racism and economic conscription. The Clash never sang *Revolution Rock*. The Specials never sung about Jean's own Coventry as a *Ghost Town*. *Free Nelson Mandela* never got any airplay. Dr Robert never gave us *Slaves no more*, etc, etc.

If you ask me, the "radical" music of the '60s never said very much of importance because it was so easy to be radical then. And, by the way, Radio One never played much of that hippy stuff at the time. Thank god.

What's more, Jean's picture of the state of popular music is very white and Anglo-American.

Go to South Africa and hear left-wing rappers like the AK47s from the Cape Flats, who fuse New York street sounds and African jazz, and tell us that we should welcome the death of the remix. I think not. We should be celebrating the passing

Students need Labour

Last week's "report" by Paul McGarry on the NUS elections was pathetic.

Does he think a Liberal or SWP victory will be progressive? Does he think it's funny that Labour Students have no candidates?

Over the last eight years NOLS has developed NUS from a

higher-education, service-based, elitist union into a representative and effective organisation. If Left Unity had been in the leadership of NUS, it would be a disaster.

Max Gordon
Walworth

PS: Remember *Yummy, Yummy, Yummy, I've Got Love in My Tummy* or *Obla di Obla da*? Very revolutionary!

In a probable election year it is vital that NUS has a Labour leadership.

N Clifton
Blackpool

WHAT'S ON

Debate on Gulf war. Simon Laughton Girls School, 4.00. Speakers include Mark Sandell and Tory MP

Women Students Anti-racism Day, Wesley House, Wild Court, London WC1, 11.00am start. Contact Jeni Bailey 071 637 1181

War rally at Sheffield City Hall, 7.30. Speakers include Alice Mahon MP

Thursday 7 March
"The Gulf War", *SO* meeting. South Manchester College, 12.30. Manchester Campaign Against War in the Gulf meeting. Town Hall, 7.30

Saturday 9 March
"Women Say No To War" demonstration, 1.00, Lincolns Inn Fields, London WC2. Organised by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf
Women in Central America conference sponsored by NALGO. 10.00-6.00, Wesley House, Wild Court, London WC2
York Socialist Organiser dayschool, 11.00-5.00, Goodricke College, York University

Wednesday 13 March
Student Lesbian and Gay Activists Conference, Sheffield University, 11.00am start

Saturday 16 March
Left Unity student AGM, Manchester. For more details ring 071 639 7967

Friday 8 March
International Women's Day anti-war action. Meet 5.00, Albert Embankment, march to St Thomas's Hospital to highlight health cuts. Vigil: 6-7 in Parliament Square. Women only
Pergamon Press picket of Mirror building, Holborn, 12.30
Rally organised by Women Against War in the Gulf. Central Hall, Westminster, 7.00. Women only
International Women's Day show. Lots of artists. Hackney Empire, 7.30. £7/£6

Tuesday 12 March
Oxford CAWG meeting. Speaker Tam Dalyell, 7.45, Town Hall
Northampton Labour Against the War meeting, 7.30, Northampton Labour Club, Charles St
Brighton *SO* meeting, "Where We Stand", 7.30, Rose Hill Tavern

Thursday 14 March
Labour Against the War rally, 7.30 Central Hall, Westminster. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Bernie Grant MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Gavin Strang MP, Dawn Primarolo MP, Audrey Wise MP, Labour Action for Peace, Labour CND
Nottingham *SO* meeting, "Fighting for Lesbian and Gay Rights", 8.00, International Community Centre

Sunday 17 March
Socialist Organiser student school. "A new world order - ours or theirs?". Details 071 639 7965
Anti-Fascist Action picket against racist attacks. Assemble at 10.00, Whitechapel Tube

Friday 15 March
Sheffield Committee to Stop

Monday 18 March
Manchester *SO* meeting, "War and socialism", Bridge St Tavern, 8.00

Saturday 23 March
National anti-poll tax demonstration, London

Give us a sign...

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

There is now quite a bit of evidence that the various sign languages are just that - languages. The part of the brain that is responsible for sign language is the same as that responsible in hearing people for processing spoken and written language.

Deaf children of deaf parents acquire sign language much as hearing children do speech. They start using genuine signs between 16 and 20 months and by 3 or 4 years are producing fluent communications as effectively as do hearing children of that age.

The plight of deaf children in hearing families, amounting to 95% of cases, is less happy. It is very difficult for the parents to become fluent in sign language. Also, hearing and non-hearing parents interact with their children in very different ways. Hearing parents tend to point and talk at the same time when trying to direct their child's attention. Deaf parents will attract their child's attention first before directing it to the object in question. They will "say" what they are trying to show the child in signs before showing it, and assist the child to make the signs itself.

Furthermore, languages such as British Sign Language (BSL) have their own syntax and grammar, different from that of English. They have a wide vocabulary and, just as complex meanings can be conveyed in speech through intonation, etc, the way the signs are delivered can communicate much more than simple meaning.

There are hundreds of sign languages throughout the world, each with its own structure and vocabulary. Some (particularly the longer-established BSL) even have regional dialects. American Sign Language (ASL) has dialects spoken by black and white deaf people. In Ireland, the Catholic and Protestant communities have different sign languages, but in ethnically-divided Belgium there is just one.

ASL was invented in the 18th century by Gallaudet, a deaf Frenchman who also set up a college for deaf students. In 1864, Gallaudet University was founded in Washington DC. Today it remains the world's only liberal arts university for deaf people. Recently it was in the news when student protests resulted in the election for the first time in its history of a deaf president. All teaching is through the medium of ASL and hearing students and lecturers must learn to use it as well.

Despite this, it is only in the last couple of decades that linguists have recognised sign languages as languages in their own right. At present, deaf

children in Britain find that they cannot get educated via their preferred language, BSL, as few teachers of the deaf know it, even in special schools. This state of affairs is partly due to the attitude that led in 1880 to an international congress of teachers of the deaf voting to ban the use of sign language and in 1889 to a Royal Commission deciding that deaf children only be taught to try to speak.

No doubt this was done for the best of motives - to promote the integration of deaf people into hearing society. But learning to speak is a daunting task for children with no idea what a word sounds like. To get a word to sound right involves seeing others pronounce it, feeling the vibrations of their vocal chords and matching those of their own. Teaching deaf people to speak may involve thousands of hours of one-to-one tuition, though a possibly less expensive approach might involve the deaf person trying to match his or her sound output to waveforms displayed on an oscilloscope.

Lip-reading is also a difficult skill to acquire, relying on a good knowledge of English so that sounds with similar lip shapes can be distinguished. It requires great concentration and is of only of use when the deaf person is facing the speaker. Both are skills more easily acquired by those who have gone deaf after learning to speak.

"Learning to speak is a daunting task for children with no idea what sounds are like...it involves seeing others pronounce it, feeling the vibrations of their vocal chords and matching those of their own."

Many deaf people have succeeded in overcoming these difficulties but nevertheless the average reading age of a deaf school leaver in Britain is less than nine. This limits their ability to gain information and enjoyment from the written word, isolates them socially, even within their own families, and holds them back in the world of work.

Many experts in deaf education favour a bilingual approach, with the young deaf child first learning sign language and then perhaps learning English (or whatever) as a written language. Sign language could also be used to help teach a deaf person to speak, since speaking and understanding speech is clearly essential in a hearing society.

This will involve not only teachers with sign language but hearing parents learning it too. The charity, Children In Need, has just funded a scheme in the Bristol area to give deaf children an adult helper fluent in BSL and to give parents practice in signing.

The government gives little money for research in BSL or for training teachers or interpreters. Research centres at the Universities of Bristol and Durham are funded mainly by charities or by the European Social Fund.

The British Deaf Association won the right for deaf youth trainees to help with communication, since extended to adults in Employment Training, but with only 90 registered BSL/English interpreters in the UK this right remains largely unrealised.

Offshore activists debate strategy

The case for a single union

By Jerry Chambers,
Offshore Industry
Liaison Committee

The resurfacing of the single union question within the committee (OILC standing committee) in the past few months is not, I believe, unrelated to the events of last summer and the debacle that was the proposed ballot.

If this committee represents anything at all it should represent the views of rank and file offshore workers. This being the case, I would find it hard to believe that members of the Committee have not experienced difficulty in promoting our policy of whole-hearted support for the official offshore unions in the teeth of what many of us have experienced to be deep-rooted suspicions amongst the workforce of these same unions.

The question which confronts us when considering the future of the OILC must be, among others:

(a) The attitude of the workforce towards the Committee as against the official unions;
(b) Are we content to continue in our acquired role as recruitment officers for the unions, giving their seeming abandonment of a single agreement?;

(c) How to address the problem of galvanising the already considerable support for the OILC in the light of the antipathy towards the unions;

(d) Our responsibility to seriously address the fact of widespread support for the single union concept, calmly and with respect for each other and the workforce.

The main problem in the drilling sector, apart from a generally hostile and vindictive management, is that most drilling workers do not have "trade skills" and therefore do not possess, for want of a better phrase, "trade union culture". Those of you in the "engineering" and "catering" sectors, where this trade union culture is stronger, have met with a greater

A major debate on strategy is opening up among activists in the offshore oil and gas industry.

Up for consideration is the idea of organising a new union for offshore workers.

After a magnificent campaign of unofficial strike action in the summer of 1989 and '90, union recognition and decent health and safety provision has not yet been won.

Last autumn, national union leaders offered official support for a recognition ballot on the apparent condition that the rank-and-file-based Offshore Industry Liaison Committee call off its unofficial strike action.

The unofficial action stopped, but the ballot never materialised. OILC activists found themselves hemmed in by the anti-union laws Kinnoch wants to keep. The best union activists were ruled out of any ballot.

As Ronnie MacDonald, chair of the OILC, explained at the time: "It's a simple fact that the officials of the unions are not balloting those workers who have been sacked. It's the law. It's not the union's position. You

response. That being said, I cannot ignore the undeniable fact that almost every offshore worker to whom I have spoken, from whatever sector, trade union member or not, has expressed varying levels of dissatisfaction with the official trade unions and asked about the formation of a single union for offshore workers. They want an organisation with which they can identify regardless of which sector they work in.

Unquestionably, Ronnie McDonald, the OILC and Blowout have provided the focal point over the past two years. They could see offshore workers in the forefront of dragging the industry into the 1990s. They felt that ordinary offshore workers would be involved at the top level, negotiating a Continental Shelf Agreement, union recognition, etc. But of course we are not!

What have we heard from the IUOOC (Inter-Union Offshore

Background to the debate

By Tom Rigby

can't get round it. Once people have been sacked they no longer have an employer, and therefore cannot declare a trade dispute.

The sacked workers and those out on the platforms are very, very angry about this.

It's so easy to get ballots invalidated. All the employers have to do is take on, say, six extra workers on the eve of a strike, and they can claim that circumstances have changed. The courts will then declare the ballot null and void. The oil contractors are also using other methods to frustrate the ballot.

They are refusing to give us accurate lists of their employees. They can then have the ballot declared invalid as some people are likely not to have been balloted".

The start of the Gulf war en-

couraged many national trade union officials to postpone the North Sea recognition fight. They were frightened of appearing unpatriotic. The TGWU, for instance, has just sat on a massive ballot vote for strike action over pay.

These problems have been compounded by divisions among national union officials and rumours of single-union and no-strike deals being cooked up. As Blow Out, the offshore workers' rank-and-file paper, put it:

"The unions' 'one table approach' has been junked in favour of 'every man for himself'. The RMT/TGWU and the EETPU are already going for the old sectional agreements, the same agreements we've worked under and died under all these years.

And where does the offshore worker stand in all this? He's the only person who can claim safety as his first priority, because he alone stands to lose his life when it fails. Our rule in the new regime is to be what it always was: stay silent if you want to keep

your job.

Well, the offshore workforce has come too far to accept that. If the 'single table' approach has failed, then a 'single union' approach must surely be up for discussion. If the national leaders of our unions can offer us no perspective for the future, then we will surely be forced to investigate all alternative possibilities".

Dissatisfaction with the officials, according to many OILC activists, must not lead to an attempt to cut off all links with the official movement. As Ronnie MacDonald puts it, "any solution must be within the mainstream of the labour movement".

The dilemma is that no matter how conciliatory the OILC may be towards the national unions currently organising offshore, the officials of the AEU, the GMB, the EETPU, MSF, RMT, and TGWU are unlikely to be willing to surrender members and dues income to a rank-and-file-controlled union.

On this page we print some comments on these issues from rank and file offshore workers.

'We need our own union'

"Let's face it, we are going nowhere at the present time. Our only hope now is to start a new single offshore union which must be run by ourselves, the offshore workers.

So I say to you the OILC, start a single offshore union right now to enable us to achieve the Continental Shelf Agreement and union recognition.

To you the established unions, I say get the hell out of the North Sea and stay out, so we can manage our own affairs."

Offshore worker, name withheld

the unions an inch!"

The fact has to be faced that the workforce continue to look for leadership. And that responsibility, awesome though it is, has to be taken on board seriously. Whether the official trade unions are effectively fulfilling that role is central to the debate.

There may be a number of options that could be considered, and every possibility should be explored. I believe that we should use every contact at our disposal. Talks should be sought with the STUC and TUC, and with the many other sympathetic trade union groups we have gained support from. Our position should be put in a concise and professional manner.

I believe that our position should be that we are a special case and that the cause of the of-

'The same old story'

"Someone commented to me recently, TUC might very well spell Tried Unsuccessfully to Co-ordinate. This statement was uttered with an air of contempt by an old friend of mine who has been a trade union member of 20 years or more. The fact that the seven main unions in the offshore industry have once again failed to agree on a single approach, a Continental Shelf-type Agreement, and a ballot, regrettably comes as no surprise. I don't think many people today believe what the unions tell them anymore. And can you blame them?

Time after time the workforce has been led up the garden path, but events over the last six months have really taken the biscuit. Ultimately the workforce is guilty of letting the unions get away with it for so long, but the TUC must accept its fair share of the blame. There is no way workers can stop their trade unions fighting amongst each other, but the TUC can.

We've been given some crap

shore workers would be better served by a single Offshore Workers' Union. I believe that the creation of such a body would dramatically increase union membership on the North Sea and put the offshore worker in a far better position to progress the struggle for the Continental Shelf Agreement, and to protect himself from victimisation. It would also ensure that health and safety would take precedence in any operation.

We should emphasise that we would wish any such union to be set up under the auspices of the STUC/TUC and that any losses to existing unions, which in most cases would not be that great, would be offset by the fact that the efficient organisation of offshore would be a tremendous asset to the trade union movement as a whole.

Such a scenario is, I believe, the employers' worst nightmare, for they know it would succeed. If we can overcome the factional aspects of the present offshore trade union scene then justice will be done for all offshore workers.

There is never a "good time" to raise contentious issues, and I believe time is not on our side. 1992 looms with all its attendant problems for offshore workers. We are at a crossroads and it is time for us to decide which road to take. If we do not decide shortly I fear it will be too late for us to achieve anything constructive, and the OILC will be consigned to the sidelines or disappear completely.

This article was taken from the offshore workers' paper Blowout.



Subscribe to Blow Out. Write to 12 Dixon St, Glasgow G1 4AX

Council workers need a united fightback

By Nik Barstow

Before rate-capping in the mid-1980s, NALGO had a "national strategy for the cuts".

It was based on the idea that unions had to come together to fight cuts and redundancies at the local, district and national level — that no group of workers should be left to stand alone.

The strategy never got acted on despite having huge support. Why? Because many local councils shied round the problem of cuts, stirring up problems for the future.

When the trouble did come with huge cuts in some London boroughs, "re-deployment" of thousands of workers, attacks on conditions and clampdowns on sickness and holidays, NALGO's leaders backed off. They "refined" the strategy.

They argued that union branches in different councils should be able to do what they wanted. If they wanted to co-operate with cuts, they could. If they wanted to fight — up to a point — they could.

NALGO got landed with a national strategy that isn't a strategy and isn't national.

With poll-tax-capping the nonsense of this has started to become clear. Workers in local councils are facing the same attacks in different parts of the country, and being left to fight it out on their own.

The major employers' bodies, the AMA and the ALA in London, have thought through their strategies. We need to think through ours.

Rule number one should be that no-one is left to fight alone, that action against redundancies is spread across all sections and the union gives a national lead with the threat of national action.

Haringey

1,200 jobs are to be axed by Labour-controlled Haringey Council as it imposes cuts to avoid poll tax-capping.

Local unions are fighting back. This Monday (4 March) NUT and NALGO members took part in a half-day strike followed by a mass lobby of the council.

Education is to be hit hardest. 30 secondary school teachers are to lose their jobs along with 180 school meals staff.

Tony Brockman, Haringey NUT Secretary, described the extent of the cuts: "They are proposing to spend between £10 and £11 million less this year than the government has recommended for education under the spending assessment. It's administering the cuts and not organising opposition to them."

Derbyshire

Derbyshire County Council plan to cut the jobs of 400 teachers and 600 educational support staff in a £16.6 million cuts package drawn up by the ruling Labour group. They have however retreated on their threats to sack firefighters.

Hackney

15,000 council workers are set to strike this Wednesday (March 6) in defence of local services.

Liverpool

1,000 jobs are under threat in Liverpool. A one-day strike is planned this Wednesday (6 March).

Trade union conference planned against Gulf intervention

Trade Unionists Against the War
Stop the intervention!

After the war: the trade union movement and the Gulf — a working conference

March 24th 1991
11.00am-4.30pm
Upper Hall, University of London Union, Malet St, WC1

£4 delegates/£1 individuals

Guest speakers:
Peter Heathfield (General Secretary, NUM); Paul Davies (NW TUC Executive, Convenor TGWU Wirral); Madeline Davidson (Secretary, NUJ Book Branch); Kursad Kahramanoglu (Chair, NALGO Black Members Group); Tony Lennon (President, BETA); plus Yemeni Workers Association and PLO (invited)

For more details contact Madeline Davidson, Secretary, Book Branch, NUJ, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Tel: 071 278 7916 ext 229; 081 451 7606; or 081 801 2841.

By Mac Clarke, NUJ Book Branch

Over 150 people joined the lobby of the TUC organised by Trade Unionists Against the War.

Speakers included Tony Lennon, President BETA; Andy Dixon from the NUT Executive; Healthworkers Against the War and Labour Against the War.

Union bosses have second thoughts

There are a few — belated — signs that sections of the British trade union bureaucracy are having second thoughts about their support for the Gulf war.

Outside the TUC General Council last Wednesday, anti-war lobbyists attempted to but-tress delegates with some interesting results.

The NUT's Doug McAvoys showed signs of extreme irritation, snapping at innocent suggestions and insisting that the

Trade union banners came from as far afield as County Durham.

Messages of support and solidarity were received from Eric Heffer MP, and the US trade union newspaper Labor Notes.

TUAW has decided not to disband, but to call a special working conference for trade unionists on the theme of "Stop the intervention". The conference will take place on Sunday 24 March.

General Council was not discussing the Gulf that day. He looked like a man under pressure.

A NALGO member told lobbyists that there had been a "very heated executive meeting" which had reversed the union's pro-war position two days earlier.

Albert Williams, the UCATT delegate to the General Council, was prepared to go on record, saying: "As far as I'm concerned, the war is over. The General Council should not give its support to any attempt to occupy Iraq."

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

An open letter to Neil Kinnock



An open letter to Neil Kinnock from Cate Murphy

Neil Kinnock: Last March you and your deputy, Roy Hattersley, rushed to side with the police after they had clashed violently with anti-poll tax protesters in central London.

You knew that there had been widespread fighting, many injuries, over 500 arrests. You could have known nothing else since, of course, you were not on the demonstration.

You didn't want to find out what had happened, or why. You knew already all that you wanted to know. You knew you were with the police and "law and order". That, your public relations minders had been telling you for five years, was where the votes lay.

In the prolonged media outcry that followed, you lent your voice to the Tory campaign to whip up a general revulsion against the violence in central London, brand the anti-poll-tax marchers as responsible, and use that as a moral blackjack to help beat down opposition to the poll tax.

That was what the Tories were trying to do, Neil Kinnock, and you helped them. The police could do no wrong where you were concerned.

You ignored the wealth of testimony from participants in the march — most of them almost certainly Labour voters — that the police had started the riot in Whitehall by riding their horses into a peaceful crowd, some of them sitting on the pavement.

You ignored the testimony of your own eyes — I assume you watch the TV news — that the police had behaved with reckless and indiscriminate violence, driving horses and police vehicles dangerously into crowds, savagely batoning peaceful bystanders, and in general behaving like a panicky mob of trainee Thatcherite cossacks.

You must have seen all that on your television screen, Mr Kinnock. It made no difference. It didn't even make you pause and reflect. It didn't lead you to ask for any sort of impartial inquiry.

Nor were you — despite your "previous life" as a man of the left — alarmed for civil liberty when newspaper and TV photographers were hounded by the courts and made to turn over their work to the police, who used it to trace demonstrators.

You lent your full weight to everything the police, the tabloid press, and the courts decreed, Mr Kinnock. You went along with the press assertions that there had been a coordinated insurrectionary movement at work in central London that day.

In a well-known passage from his book on the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell memorably explained how he came, against some of his

Fight the poll tax!



Riot police attack poll tax protesters on last year's demonstration. Photo: Paul Mattsson

previous political prejudices, to side in May 1937 with the Anarchist and Trotskyist workers against the Republican state in Barcelona. "When I see the workers being attacked by their natural enemies, the police, I don't have to ask myself which side I'm on".

Neither do you, Mr Kinnock. Neither do you. And there is the pity of it.

Now the report of Scotland Yard's own inquiry into the anti-poll-tax fighting — by the Deputy Assistant Commissioner, John Metcalfe — admits that there was no coordination against the police, and that the police made big errors.

That is quite a lot for an official police inquiry to admit, don't you think, Mr Kinnock? Perhaps an impartial inquiry would find a lot more to criticise in the behaviour of the police?

Mr Kinnock, things were done by the police during the "riots" and in collecting evidence afterwards which pose a grave threat to civil liberty in this country, and to

freedom of the press. In view of the admission now by the police themselves that things were not as you and the rest of the Establishment and its press said they were in Trafalgar Square last March, is it not time for you, the leader of the Labour Party, to change your tune?

You should demand a proper public inquiry into the riots and what happened afterwards. You should defend those still being hounded by the state for their part in the demonstration last March.

And, Mr Kinnock you should here and now pledge your support to the next anti-poll-tax march on 23 March. That would be one way to help ensure that the police behave themselves and refrain from turning this event, too, into a riot.

Mr Kinnock, the poll tax has done the Tories immense damage. If Labour wins the next election, then we will owe our victory much more to the Tory blunder with the poll tax than to anything you have done in seven years as leader.

Having more or less admitted

that the poll tax is unjustifiable, the Tories nevertheless seem set to keep on with it, perhaps modified.

There could not be a greater opportunity for the Labour Party to get the Tories out of office in the three or four months before the general election probable in June than a vigorous campaign against the poll tax. The Tories have wrongfooted themselves badly by

effectively admitting that the tax cannot be continued, but refusing to go on and abolish it.

There is still time for you to help build the campaign that will sweep the Tories out of office if they dare to go to the electorate in June.

It is about time you joined the anti-poll-tax campaign, Mr Kinnock!

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