

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### A statement from the Editorial Board



#### The ban on Socialist Organiser

# Stop the

# oil



Bush

# WAR

# war



# now!

### Thatcher fights for oil, not for the hostages!

All-out war may start this weekend in the Gulf with a US blitz on Iraq.

Some experts calculated that by then (25-26 August) the US will have built up a sufficient force for US generals to feel confident of a

quick and crushing military victory over Iraq.

President Bush needs victory, and quickly. The US has now more or less stopped pretending that it can be a peaceful victory. The

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The world's bosses know what the war is about

On 18 August the Socialist Organiser Alliance, the organisation behind the left-wing newspaper *Socialist Organiser*, was dissolved on the recommendation of its National Editorial Board.

The board also called on local Socialist Organiser groups to disband.

The decision came in response to a letter from Joyce Gould, the Labour Party's Director of Organisation, which reported the NEC's decisions that the group constituted "an organisation ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party" and that participation in it would be in breach of the Labour Party constitution.

The Editorial Board announced that it was reluctantly calling on the Socialist Organiser Alliance to close down in order to safeguard the Labour Party membership of its supporters.

"Our supporters are loyal Labour Party members. Although, therefore, we disagree with the NEC's ban, we feel that we must comply with their decisions."

Fears that its supporters will still face disciplinary action for their past membership of the organisation have prompted the Editorial Board to circulate an emergency resolution for the Labour Party conference asking that no action be taken against former members.

The Editorial Board points to Clause III(4) of the Labour Party constitution which safeguards party members from disciplinary action for "the mere holding or expression of beliefs or opinions."

As regards the future of the newspaper, the Editorial Board has decided to disband itself. The paper will be relaunched with the editors sharing responsibility for the paper's policy with an expanded advisory board to include prominent Labour left-wingers and MPs.

The editors hope that this advisory board will help broaden the range of contributions to the paper, in line with *Socialist Organiser's* established policy of providing a broad forum for debate, and thus enable the paper to make a greater contribution to the Party.

The newspaper's staff are keenly aware that the decision to disband the Socialist Organiser Alliance will put them in the same situation as *Tribune* as regards sources of finance. "We will need more readers, more subscriptions, more donations. We appeal to all those who value the existence of a lively and critically-minded labour movement press to help."

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



# The issues in the Gulf

## EDITORIAL

From page 1

American leaders are openly preparing for war.

The British government continues to pretend that it believes that there can be a peaceful victory. Its talk may indicate private differences with the Americans; but when war comes Britain will be in the thick of it — and without even a pretence at a prior democratic decision in Parliament. The Labour leaders are too busy echoing Mrs Thatcher and President Bush to even demand the immediate recall of Parliament!

The British working class is being subjected to an immense barrage of *blatant war propaganda* about new Hitlers, hostages, Arab madmen, and gallant little Kuwait. With war on a scale not known since Vietnam looming, socialists should be clear about what is happening and why. In this as in all wars and build-ups to war, truth is the first casualty.

**• Is it a matter of the UN acting to deal with an aggressor before he gets too powerful?**

No, it isn't. The ideal of a world government that can act to stop wars and to right wrongs is an attractive one. The UN isn't it; and if it is, there are wrongs far worse than the invasion of Kuwait for it to deal with. The plight of the Kurdish nation, which has been butchered for decades by Iran and Iraq, is a case in point. So is the Palestinian Arabs' demand for Israel to get out of the West Bank and Gaza.

The UN rightly condemned the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait. It then declared an economic boycott of Iraq. Then the US turned the economic boycott into a naval blockade, and started a build-up of forces in Saudi Arabia.

Economic sanctions, to be effective, need military and naval force. But the UN did not decide on force. The US did. The US seized on the UN vote and turned it into something else.

The idea of a UN-regulated democratic world is a good one. In practice the UN has just served as a stepping stone for US aggression.

**• Why did the US move as it has done?**

Because of oil. Because it wants to keep as much control as it can of the oil supplies of the Gulf sheikhdoms, of which Kuwait was one, and of Iraq.

It felt able to act as it did, with brutal old-fashioned imperialist vigour, because the collapse of the USSR's empire and of the USSR's international pretensions gave the US a freedom of action it has not had for decades; and because the militant expansionism of the Iraqi state so alarmed many other Arab states that they are, for now, willing to invite the US to help them put

*'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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down Iraq, the new Arabian Prussia.

Many of those Arab states are client states of the US — even the biggest of them, Egypt — and many of them depend heavily on subsidies from Saudi Arabia.

**• Why did Britain and the other big powers support the US?**

Because they all depend on Middle East oil. (Britain is self-sufficient now, but not for long).

And because the US has increased in world status and weight after the collapse of the USSR's empire, and can exert pressure on them.

**• Why did Iraq invade Kuwait?**

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

Iraq seized the oil wealth in Kuwait as a means of escape from bankruptcy.

**• Should we call for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait?**

Yes. "Self-determination for Kuwait" is a different question.

Apart from Egypt, all the Arab states are artificially drawn, including Iraq. For centuries their area was united within the Turkish Empire. The Arabs have a common language, culture and identity. The existing states were created after World War 1 by France and Britain, the controlling imperialist powers which replaced defeated Turkey.

The Gulf sheikhdoms were deliberately fostered in the 19th century to enable Britain to control the seas, and have been nursed into the late 20th century to allow the imperialist powers to have safe access to the oil in the area. They are ruled by feudal relics out of the Middle Ages.

Iraq has a long-standing claim to Kuwait. In 1961 British troops landed there to forestall a threatened Iraqi invasion. And Kuwait is an artificial unit not just historically.

The Kuwaitis are less than half the population. They form a sort of rentier caste, while the work is done by migrant workers. Many of those migrant workers are Palestinians, who hate the Kuwaiti elite as exploiters. The exploited workers are reported to have looted the shops in Kuwait City after the Iraqi invasion.

That does not give the Iraqi dictatorship the right to invade. But opposition to the invasion does not legitimise the old order in Kuwait, or make the old regime there, which the Americans and British propped up and now want to restore, other than a grotesque anachronism.

We would not necessarily be against a democratic Iraq — let alone a socialist Iraq — annexing Kuwait. But not this murderous Iraqi regime!

A parallel is the Saarland in western Germany, cut off from Germany against the will of its German people after World War 1. Socialists opposed and denounced that cutting off. In 1935 a referendum was held to decide whether the Saar people would "go back" to Germany.

But this was Hitler's Germany, where the labour movement was pulverised. Trotsky, who had denounced the original Franco-British cutting off of the Saar, argued that something higher than the German national principle was at stake, the rights of the Saar workers, and called for a no vote in the referendum.

And in this case there is no special national principle between Kuwait and Iraq as distinct from other Arab states.

**• Why is the USSR, Iraq's ally and armourer, almost silent?**

The USSR is in a tremendous crisis. It suffered collapse in its competition with the US. Its rulers



Iraqi tanks in Kuwait: what attitude should socialists take to the conflict?

are now trying to restore capitalism there and hope for aid from the West. The USSR has dropped its pretensions to a world imperialist role, for now.

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

**• Why shouldn't the US stop Iraq cornering 56 per cent of the world's oil?**

Why not indeed! Equally, in a world of power politics, why shouldn't Iraq try to corner it? Why shouldn't Japan resent the fact that the landing of US forces in Arabia gives the US a tremendous hold on much of the world's oil supplies?

The point is that the US acts here — despite all its pious words — as a player in the naked competition of states for power and resources.

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

**• But the US is not "occupying" Saudi Arabia. It is engaged in a limited policing operation. It will soon withdraw.**

Not so. Even George Bush's ad-

visers openly talk about US troops continuing in Saudi Arabia into election year, 1992, and beyond. Even if the US brings down Saddam Hussein, the signs are that the Saudi regime has already been destabilised. There is great Arab resentment at those Arabs who invited in the "infidel imperialists". Pan-Arab nationalism, dormant for 20 years, is already a force across the jigsaw of Arab states.

Even if Saddam Hussein is toppled, the forces of Arab nationalism unleashed by the US occupation will be a threat to those regimes on which the West depends to control the oil areas. Whatever happens to Iraq, the forces unleashed by the US landing may make continued occupation necessary to secure America's interests.

In 1984 the US was driven out of Lebanon by such militant Arab tactics as suicide bombings. Continued US occupation would evoke such things again. This time the US could not retreat, because the economic purpose the military occupation serves is central to US interests.

Widespread open war is possible. The combination of the political situation in the Arab world, the effect on its Arab allies of the US landing, and the vital nature of the economic interests involved, could involve the US — and its allies — in a new, protracted, Vietnam-type war in the years ahead.

Even on the most optimistic scenario, this is no quick in and out police operation.

**• But the hostages...**

Saddam Hussein is a murdering tyrant in the Hitler-Stalin mould. He will use any weapon he can find. His use of civilian hostages to inhibit US attack is business as usual for the man who gasses his own people (with the silent acquiescence of the West, which supported his regime!)

But we should not fall for war propaganda about the hostages. Saddam Hussein is trying to use the hostages to stop devastating air attacks which would kill and maim countless Iraqis. It is not for those who are even now preparing such attacks to be so self-righteous about Saddam Hussein's barbarous treatment of the foreign hostages.

**• Saddam Hussein claims to represent Arab nationalism. Does he?**

Yes and no. The Arabs across 20 states claim to be one nation. They blame imperialism for their division. They see the imperialist-protected feudal entities like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as part of the imperialist carve-up of the area.

The Arabs have been unable to unite. The attempted unification of Egypt and Syria in 1958-61 proved

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## 4 GULF CRISIS

### The issues in the Gulf

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how difficult Arab unity is to achieve. Yet the Arabs have the right to aspire to unity, and to have the support of socialists against any obstruction by the imperialist powers.

Saddam Hussein has appealed to that aspiration with great success. It is especially the disaffected, the poor and the dispossessed Palestinians who rally to the call of Arab nationalism. They see Arab unity as something almost mystical which will solve all their social problems (it wouldn't!).

Saddam Hussein acted as a pirate, aggrandising the Iraqi state. The US response has made him the champion of an Arab nationalist resurgence. The more he is attacked, the more that resurgence will intensify and spread.

If he should survive, he will be the champion of Arab nationalism that Nasser was in the '50s and '60s. If he loses, he will be its martyr, leaving the ground alight under the US Army's feet behind him.

That alone is sufficient argument against what the US is doing. It is doubtful that the US leaders knew what they were stirring up.

#### Should we support Saddam Hussein?

No! Iraq is a sub-imperialist power, competing with its former sponsor the US. Even if the Arab could be united around the 17 million strong Iraqi state (there are 200 million Arabs, 50 million of them in Egypt), it would be like the Prussian unification of Germany in 1871: socialists and democrats would accept it, but fight the political regime. In fact that unity is impossible. Even after facing down Britain and France at Suez in 1956, Nasser couldn't unite the Arabs around Egypt, which already had a quarter of all Arabs.

Nor his demagoguery about Arab unity, nor even a real leadership of most of the divided Arab people, would make Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist military regime other than a bitter enemy of socialists and democrats, especially Arab socialists and democrats. The socialist who gives any credence to Saddam Hussein is no longer a socialist.

The only support we owe Saddam Hussein and his regime is support if they fight for Iraqi self-determination against an American imperialist invasion or blitzkrieg.

Such support would not mean any political endorsement for Saddam Hussein, or any let-up in the Iraqi workers' struggle against him (compare Trotsky's argument on the Chinese workers and Chiang Kai-shek, on page 8 of this issue). And even an American blitzkrieg would not legitimise the attempt of Iraqi sub-imperialism to grab control of 56 per cent of the world's oil.

To forget that is to go from opposition to our own imperialism, and support for the right of self-determination of the Iraqis and of the Arabs, to positive support for Iraq's government and its Kuwaiti adventure. It is to transform ourselves into an appendage of Iraqi policy.

It is like the position of Neil Kinnock towards the British ruling class and the US — only inside out. Whereas Kinnock fawns to his masters in London and Washington, we would fawn to the enemies of our ruling class's enemies.

#### Nevertheless Saddam Hussein is now "objectively anti-imperialist".

That is what *Socialist Worker* says. But he isn't! And pan-Arab nationalism is not really anti-imperialist either!

Socialists should support the unity of the Arab people if they themselves wish it. The achievement of such unity would be progressive

in part because it would clear the minds of the Arab working class and help them to deal with their own ruling classes. But popular pan-Arab nationalism today is an ideological system which ties the working class to the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the bourgeoisie.

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

To accept as even provisional good coin, for now, the anti-imperialism of Saddam Hussein is to betray the Arab workers and peasants, especially when we may be forced by events to give specific and limited support to him against, for example, an attempt to occupy Iraq. The real anti-imperialist programme in the Middle East today is the programme of working class action, and the real revolutionary unifier of the Arabs is the creation of the Socialist United States of the Middle East.

There is another aspect. Where Nasser and earlier pan-Arabists were secularists, Saddam Hussein is a religious fundamentalist too. Much of the fundamentalists' "anti-imperialism" — that of the Iranian mullahs, too — is a rabid hostility to the modern world for religious reasons. Socialists can only be completely hostile to such an outlook.

#### Why then give Saddam Hussein and sub-imperialist Iraq any support at all, in any circumstances? Socialists do not support one imperialism against another.

A sub-imperialism is an aspirant regional imperialism, usually a client or semi-client of a fully-developed imperialist state — Argentina and Brazil in South America, for example, Iran and then Iraq in the Middle East.

In the course of its over-ambitious contest with the US in the region, Iraq, so recently a colony, may find itself faced with conquest and subjugation. The sub-imperialist drive can collapse into its opposite.

When Iraq confronts the US, the imperialism in that of the US, whose role may and probably will continue in the region even if it sees off Saddam Hussein; and Iraq has already begun to play a role in the region — however demagogically — of a champion for the Arab masses of pan-Arab nationalism. Socialists have no interest in seeing Iraq subjugated or pulverised.

It is different from the Falklands war. Argentina was not threatened, and was never likely to be threatened, with invasion, subjugation, or a blitzkrieg from the air.

#### Socialist Organiser supports Israel's right to exist. A united and victorious Arab people would challenge that right forcefully. We cannot be both for Arab unity and for Israel's right to exist.

The right of the Arabs to unite — and to be free from foreign conquest — cannot be conditional on their acceptance of Israel. The question is how the Arabs can unite. Socialists advocate a democratic — and not a "Prussian"-Iraqi — unification, and Arab acceptance of the national rights of minority nations in the region such as the Kurds and Israeli Jews.

#### What should we do in Britain?

Oppose the war propaganda. Demand that Britain pulls out. Demand that Parliament is recalled immediately. Call Neil Kinnock to account for his belly-crawling to Thatcher and the Tory warmongers who hope to reap an electoral benefit from the Middle East of the sort they got from the Falklands war in 1982.



Palestinians with portrait of Saddam

## Why the Palestinians cheer Saddam

**Adam Keller, editor of 'The Other Israel', spoke to SO about reactions in the Middle East to the Kuwait crisis**

**T**here is a big rise in Arab nationalism. The whole idea of pan-Arabism, which has been dormant for the past two decades since the death of Nasser, has suddenly come alive.

I think there are two basic reasons. First of all, there is widespread hatred of the regimes of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates in the Arab world — especially among the Palestinians. There are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians working as guest workers in those states, where they have been treated as second-class citizens by Kuwait and the other Emirates. There was a spontaneous burst of support for Saddam Hussein because he overthrew the Kuwaiti regime.

### Iraq out of Kuwait! Israel out of the occupied territories!

**O**ccupation is occupation! The conquest and occupation of a territory against the will of its people is definitely contrary to the internationally accepted norms which have recently been reconfirmed by the UN Security Council.

The occupation of Kuwait by the Iraqi army deserves to be strongly condemned. But such condemnations become ridiculous when voiced by a government which at the same time maintains the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

During the past two years the Israeli government has rejected all peace initiatives and proposals for negotiations; it refused to make even the smallest steps towards a solution. During the past two years, PLO speakers have, again and again, called upon Israel to start peace negotiations; these proposals were all rejected out of hand, and the occupation continued.

Among Palestinians despair and fury grew; it was the Israeli govern-

ment itself that drove the Palestinians into Saddam Hussein's arms. The Kuwait crisis should be solved peacefully, without a flare-up which could set the whole Middle East on fire. If attacked, Israel has the right to defend itself, but Israel has no interest in supporting dangerous adventures. In particular, Israel must avoid military intervention in Jordan, under whatever pretext; such an intervention would have immeasurably destructive consequences.

At this time of difficult and dangerous crisis we must extend our hand to the Palestinian people; an Israeli peace initiative is more than ever required. Contrary to what Shamir and his ministers would like to believe, the Palestinian problem is not, and will not be, off the regional or global agenda. The unified opposition of the international community to conquest and occupation of territories is a ray of hope, and is bound to have consequences also for the future of Israel and the territories under its occupation.

The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace,

The Palestinians also feel that the status quo in the Middle East is working against them. The status quo is that they are on the bottom and have no rights. For the last two years they have had high hopes that they would get something from the Americans. But nothing has come out of the diplomatic process. The Palestinians feel frustrated. The intifada was stagnating. There was more and more despair inside the occupied territories. And then suddenly comes Saddam Hussein!

Among the Palestinians, the lower down the social scale you go the more support you find for Saddam Hussein. The leadership of the intifada has some reservations about Saddam Hussein, but the poor people are undoubtedly on his side.

The demonstrations in the West Bank and the Arab countries were not spontaneous, but I think that the mood which they captured came from below.

The Hamas — that's the Islamic movement in the occupied territories, which has made itself the competitor of the PLO — was silent at the beginning because there were rumours that they used to get fun-

ding from Kuwait. Then they got pressure from their grassroots and they suddenly came out also in favour of Saddam Hussein and even declared a general strike in favour of Iraq.

I understand why the Palestinians take this position, though myself I don't feel I could support Saddam Hussein. My position, and more or less the position of the Jewish members of my party, is that we understand why the Palestinians take this position, and we do not join in the wild denunciations of them made by some Zionist leftists, but we ourselves do not share the enthusiasm for Iraq.

My party, the Progressive List for Peace, is in a big crisis because our Arab members are very much in favour of Saddam Hussein.

In Israel there is a strong demand to have gas masks because of the threat by Saddam Hussein to use chemical weapons.

The official position of the army is that they have gas masks ready, but the time has not yet come to distribute them.

Will there be gas masks for the Palestinians? It's not clear, especially in the occupied territories, where the people are not Israeli citizens. But the Palestinians will be hit as well if there is a chemical attack on Israel — especially Palestinians who are working in Israeli cities.

The prospects, I think, depend very much on how stable the regime of King Hussein is. As long as King Hussein is more or less in control, I think Israel will not become involved even if the Americans start a war with Iraq.

But the government has declared that the entry of Iraqi forces into Jordan would be a catastrophe for Israel — and they would respond by war on Iraq. This position is shared by a very large part of the left, by the Zionist left you could say.

So if King Hussein is overthrown, or his regime is weakened, or there is a civil war in Jordan, or the Iraqis are called on by some faction in Jordan to intervene, that could lead to war.

The US is urging Israel to do nothing, because Saddam Hussein is trying to present the conflict as something involving Israel to help him get support in the Arab world and to discredit the Arab states which support the US.

In fact, what some people in the Israeli government are starting to be afraid of is that this situation will discredit the Israeli claim that Israel is a strategic asset for the US.

Also there are fears in government circles, and hopes on the left, that the combined action of the

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Trotsky takes a breather

# Stalinism and the Bolshevik tradition

Leon Trotsky was murdered by a Stalinist agent 50 years ago this week. His skull was shattered by an ice-pick on 20 August 1940, and he died on 21 August.

Trotsky was the foremost, the most consistent, the most courageous, and the most tenacious leader of the struggle against the Stalinist counter-revolution in the USSR. He and his comrades pursued that struggle on the basis of the ideas of the Bolshevik party that had made the 1917 revolution.

Yet today many say that Stalinism was not the counter-revolutionary reversal of Bolshevism, but its direct and logical continuation. Trotsky responded to those arguments in a 1937 pamphlet, 'Stalinism and Bolshevism', from which we reprint extracts.

**U**nder the banner of Bolshevism the first victory of the proletariat was achieved and the first workers' state established. No force can now erase these facts from history.

But since the October Revolution has led to the present stage of the triumph of the bureaucracy, with its system of repression, plunder, and falsification — the 'dictatorship of the lie', to use Schlamm's happy ex-

pression — many formalistic and superficial minds jump to a summary conclusion: one cannot struggle against Stalinism without renouncing Bolshevism.

'We must return from Bolshevism to Marxism'. How? To what Marxism? Before Marxism became 'bankrupt' in the form of Bolshevism it has already broken down in the form of social democracy.

Does the slogan 'Back to Marxism' then mean a leap over the periods of the Second and Third Internationals...to the First International? But it too broke down in its time. Thus in the last analysis it is a question of returning to the collected works of Marx and Engels. One can accomplish this historic leap without leaving one's study and even without taking off one's slippers. But how are we going to go from our classics (Marx died in 1883, Engels in 1895) to the tasks of a new epoch, omitting several decades of theoretical and political struggles, among them Bolshevism and the October Revolution?

None of those who propose to renounce Bolshevism as an historically bankrupt tendency has indicated any other course. So the question is reduced to the simple advice to

study *Capital*. We can hardly object. But the Bolsheviks, too, studied *Capital* and not badly either. This did not however prevent the degeneration of the Soviet state and the staging of the Moscow trials. So what is to be done?

**Is Bolshevism responsible for Stalinism?**

Is it true that Stalinism represents the legitimate product of Bolshevism, as all reactionaries maintain, as Stalin himself avows, as the Mensheviks, the anarchists, and certain left doctrinaires considering themselves Marxist believe? 'We have always predicted this,' they say. 'Having started with the prohibition of other socialist parties, the repression of the anarchists, and the setting up of the Bolshevik dictatorship in the Soviets, the October Revolution could only end in the dictatorship of the Bureaucracy. Stalin is the continuation and also the bankruptcy of Leninism.'

The flaw in this reasoning begins in the tacit identification of Bolshevism, October Revolution and Soviet Union. The historical process of the struggle of hostile

forces is replaced by the evolution of Bolshevism in a vacuum. Bolshevism, however, is only a political tendency closely fused with the working class but not identical with it. And aside from the working class there exist in the Soviet Union a hundred million peasants, diverse nationalities, and a heritage of oppression, misery and ignorance. The state built up by the Bolsheviks reflects not only the thought and will of Bolshevism but also the cultural level of the country, the social composition of the population, the pressure of a barbaric past and no less barbaric world imperialism. To represent the process of degeneration of the Soviet state as the evolution of pure Bolshevism is to ignore social reality in the name of only one of its elements, isolated by pure logic. One has only to call this elementary mistake by its true name to do away with every trace of it.

Bolshevism, in any case, never identified itself either with the October Revolution or with the Soviet state that issued from it. Bolshevism considered itself as one of the factors of history, its 'conscious' factor — a very important but not decisive one. We never

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# Stalinism and the Bolshevik tradition

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sinned in historical subjectivism. We saw the decisive factor — on the existing basis of productive forces — in the class struggle, not only on a national but on an international scale.

When the Bolsheviks made concessions to the peasant tendency, to private ownership, set up strict rules for membership of the party, purged the party of alien elements, prohibited other parties, introduced the NEP, granted enterprises as concessions, or concluded diplomatic agreements with imperialist governments, they were drawing partial conclusions from the basic fact that had been theoretically clear to them from the beginning; that the conquest of power, however important it may be in itself, by no means transforms the party into a sovereign ruler of the historical process. Having taken over the state, the party is able, certainly, to influence the development of society with a power inaccessible to it before; but in return it submits itself to a 10 times greater influence from all other elements in society. It can, by the direct attack of hostile forces, be thrown out of power. Given a more drawn out tempo of development, it can degenerate internally while holding on to power. It is precisely this dialectic of the historical process that is not understood by those sectarian logicians who try to find in the decay of the Stalinist bureaucracy a crushing argument against Bolshevism.

In essence these gentlemen say: the revolutionary party that con-

tains in itself no guarantee against its own degeneration is bad. By such a criterion Bolshevism is naturally condemned: it has no talisman. But the criterion itself is wrong. Scientific thinking demands a concrete analysis: how and why did the party degenerate? No one but the Bolsheviks themselves have, up to the present time, given such an analysis. To do this they had no need to break with Bolshevism. On the contrary, they found in its arsenal all they needed for the explanation of their fate. They drew this conclusion: certainly Stalinism 'grew out' of Bolshevism, not logically, however, but dialectically; not as a revolutionary affirmation but as a Thermidorian negation. It is by no means the same.

## Bolshevism's basic prognosis

The Bolsheviks, however, did not have to wait for the Moscow trials to explain the reasons for the disintegration of the governing party of the USSR. Long ago they foresaw and spoke of the theoretical possibility of this development. Let us remember the prognosis of the Bolsheviks, not only on the eve of the October Revolution but years before. The specific alignment of forces in the national and international field can enable the proletariat to seize power first in a backward country such as Russia. But the same alignment of forces proves beforehand that **without a more or less rapid victory of the proletariat in the advanced countries the workers' government in Russia will not survive.** Left to itself

the Soviet regime must either fall or degenerate. More exactly; it will first degenerate and then fall.

From the clear understanding of this danger issued the Left Opposition, definitely formed in 1923. Recording day by day the symptoms of degeneration, it tried to oppose to the growing Thermidor the conscious will of the proletarian vanguard. However, this subjective factor proved to be insufficient. The 'gigantic masses' which, according to Lenin, decided the outcome of the struggle, became tired of internal privations and of waiting too long for the world revolution. The mood of the masses declined. The bureaucracy won the upper hand. It cowed the revolutionary vanguard, trampled upon Marxism, prostituted the Bolshevik party. Stalinism conquered. In the form of the Left Opposition, Bolshevism broke with the Soviet bureaucracy and its Comintern. This was the real course of development.

To be sure, in a formal sense Stalinism did issue from Bolshevism. Even today the Moscow bureaucracy continues to call itself the Bolshevik party. It is simply using the old label of Bolshevism to better fool the masses. So much the more pitiful are those theoreticians who take the shell for the kernel and appearance for reality. In the identification of Bolshevism and Stalinism they render the best possible service to the Thermidorians and precisely thereby play a clearly reactionary role.

In view of the elimination of all other parties from the political field the antagonistic interests and tendencies of the various strata of the population, to a greater or lesser degree, had to find their expression in the governing party. To the extent that the political centre of gravity has shifted from the proletarian vanguard to the bureaucracy, the party has changed its social structure as well as its ideology. Owing to the tempestuous course of development, it has suffered in the last 15 years a far more radical degeneration than did the social democracy in half a century. The present purge draws between Bolshevism and Stalinism not simply a bloody line but a whole river of blood. The annihilation of all the older generation of Bolsheviks, an important part of the middle generation which participated in the civil war, and that part of the youth that took up most seriously the Bolshevik traditions, shows not only a political but a thoroughly physical incompatibility between Bolshevism and Stalinism. How can this not be seen?

## Stalinism and 'state socialism'

The anarchists, for their part, try to see in Stalinism the organic product, not only of Bolshevism and Marxism, but of 'state socialism' in general. They are willing to replace Bakunin's patriarchal 'federation of free communes' by the modern federation of free Soviets. But, as formerly, they are against centralised state power. Indeed, one branch of 'state' Marxism, social democracy, after coming to power became an open agent of capitalism. The other gave birth to a new privileged caste. It is obvious that the source of evil lies in the state. From a wide historical viewpoint, there is a grain of truth in



This grim gallery was compiled by the US Socialist Workers Party in

this reasoning. The state as an apparatus of coercion is an undoubted source of political and moral infection. This also applies, as experience has shown, to the workers' state. Consequently it can be said that Stalinism is a product of a condition of society in which society was still unable to tear itself out of the strait-jacket of the state. But this position, contributing nothing to the elevation of Bolshevism and Marxism, characterises only the general level of mankind, and above all — the relation of forces between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Having agreed with the anarchists that the state, even the workers' state, is the offspring of class barbarism and that real human history will begin with the abolition of the state, we have still before us in full force the question: what ways and methods will lead, ultimately, to the abolition of the state?

To deduce Stalinism from Bolshevism or from Marxism is the same as to deduce, in a larger sense, counter-revolution from revolution. Liberal-conservative and later reformist thinking has always been characterised by this cliché. Due to the class structure of society, revolutions have always produced counter-revolutions. Does this not indicate, asks the logician, that there is some inner flaw in the revolutionary method? However, neither the liberals nor reformists have succeeded, as yet, in inventing a more 'economical' method. But it is not easy to rationalise the living historic process, it is not at all dif-

icult to give a rational interpretation of the alternative of its waves and thus by pure logic to deduce Stalinism from 'state socialism' fascism from Marxism, reaction from revolution, in a word the antithesis from the thesis. In this domain as in many others anarchism thought is the prisoner of liberal rationalism. Real revolutionary thinking is not possible without dialectics.

## The political 'sins' of Bolshevism as the source of Stalinism

As far as the prohibition of other Soviet parties is concerned, it did not flow from any 'theory' of Bolshevism but was a measure of defence of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country surrounded by enemies on all sides. For the Bolsheviks it was clear from the beginning that this measure later completed by the prohibition of factions inside the governing party itself, signalled a tremendous danger. However, the root of the danger lay not in the doctrine or the tactics but in the material weakness of the dictatorship, in the difficulties of its internal and international situation. If the revolution had triumphed, even if only in Germany, the need of prohibiting the other Soviet parties would have immediately fallen away. It is absolutely indisputable that the domination of a single party served as the juridical point of departure for the Stalinist totalitarian regime



Trotsky in jail after the 1905 revolution

# Testament

## General Staff of 1917

### EXECUTIONER, ALONE REMAINS



1938. Alexandra Kollontai was not in fact missing, but a member of Stalin's diplomatic service

The reason for this development lies neither in Bolshevism nor in the prohibition of other parties as a temporary war measure, but in the number of defeats of the proletariat in Europe and Asia.

There remains only the fact that the Bolsheviks from the beginning applied not only conviction but also compulsion, often to a most severe degree. It is also indisputable that later the bureaucracy which grew out of the revolution monopolised the system of compulsions in its own hands. Every stage of development, even such catastrophic stages as revolution and counter-revolution, flows from the preceding stage, is rooted in it and carries over some of its features. Liberals, including the Webbs, have always maintained that the Bolshevik dictatorship represented only a new edition of Tsarism. They close their eyes to such 'details' as the abolition of the monarchy and the nobility, the handing over of the land to the peasants, the expropriation of capital, the introduction of the planned economy, atheist education, and so on. In exactly the same way liberal-anarchist thought closes its eyes to the fact that the Bolshevik revolution, with all its repressions, meant an upheaval of social relations in the interests of the masses, whereas Stalin's Thermidorian upheaval accompanies the reconstruction of Soviet society in the interest of a privileged minority. It is clear that in the identification of Stalinism with Bolshevism there is not a trace of socialist criteria.

#### Questions of morals

Complaints of the 'immorality' of Bolshevism come particularly from those boastful nonentities whose cheap masks were torn away by Bolshevism.

The moral qualities of every party flow, in the last analysis, from the historical interests that it represents. The moral qualities of Bolshevism, self-renunciation, disinterestedness, audacity and contempt for every kind of tinsel and falsehood — the highest qualities of human nature! — flow from revolutionary intransigence in the service of the oppressed. The Stalinist bureaucracy imitates also in this domain the words and gestures of Bolshevism. But when 'intransigence' and 'inflexibility' are applied by a police apparatus in the service of a privileged minority they become a force of demoralisation and gangsterism. One can feel only contempt for these gentlemen who identify the revolutionary heroism of the Bolsheviks with the bureaucratic cynicism of the Thermidorians.

Even now, in spite of the dramatic events in the recent period, the average philistine prefers to believe that the struggle between Bolshevism ('Trotskyism') and Stalinism concerns a clash of personal ambitions; or, at best, a conflict between two 'shades' of Bolshevism. The crudest expression of this opinion is given by Norman Thomas, leader of the American Socialist Party: 'There is little reason to believe,' he writes (*Socialist Review*, September 1937,

p6), 'that if Trotsky had won (!) instead of Stalin, there would be an end of intrigue, plots, and a reign of fear in Russia'. And this man considers himself...a Marxist. One would have the same right to say: 'There is little reason to believe that if instead of Pius XI, the Holy See were occupied by Norman I, the Catholic Church would have been transformed into a bulwark of socialism'. Thomas fails to understand that it is not a question of match between Stalin and Trotsky, but of an antagonism between the bureaucracy and the proletariat. To be sure, the governing stratum of the USSR is forced even now to adapt itself to the still not wholly liquidated heritage of revolution, while preparing at the same time through direct civil war (bloody 'purge' — mass annihilation of the discontented) a change of the social regime. But in Spain the Stalinist clique is already acting openly as a bulwark of the bourgeois order against socialism. The struggle against the Bonapartist bureaucracy is turning before our eyes into class struggle: two worlds, two programmes, two moralities. If Thomas thinks that the victory of the socialist proletariat over the infamous caste of oppressors would not politically and morally regenerate the Soviet regime, he proves only that for all his reservations, shufflings and pious sighs he is far nearer to the Stalinist bureaucracy than to the workers. Like other exposers of Bolshevik 'immorality', Thomas has simply not grown to the level of revolutionary morality.

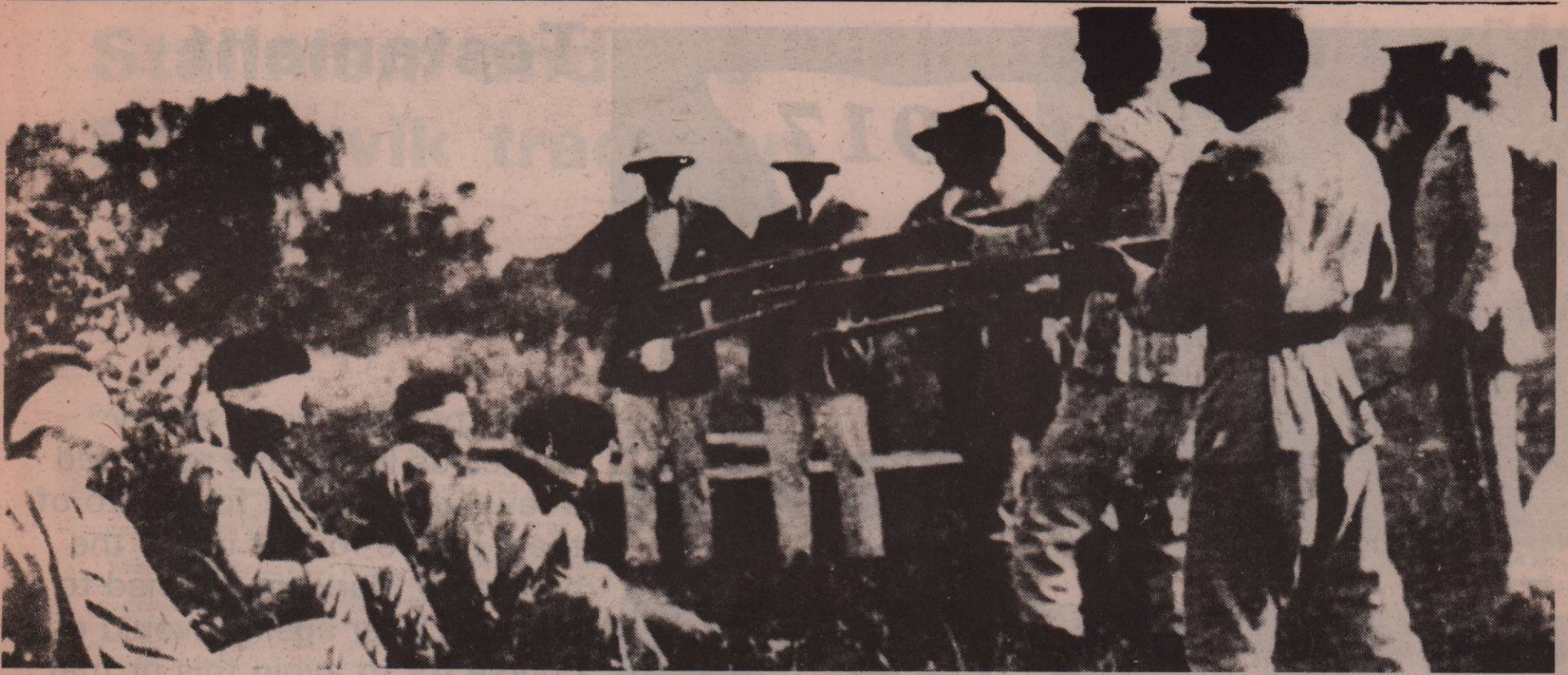
For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and consequently an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today than it was in the days of my youth.

Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence and enjoy it to the full.

L Trotsky  
Coyoacan  
27 February 1940



Trotsky after the assassin's blow



Revolutionary workers and students being shot by Kuomintang soldiers on the outskirts of Shanghai in April 1927.

# A letter to Diego Rivera

When Leon Trotsky died in 1940, the world was divided into rival imperialist blocks, at war to redivide the world. In the first quarter century after his death those capitalist-imperialist blocks were broken up. Colonialism retreated. The sort of questions dealt with by Trotsky in this letter existed mainly as questions about the attitude of socialists to Stalinist-led anti-imperialist movements, for example, in Vietnam.

Today, the conflict in the Middle East poses such questions to us again. Plainly a text of Trotsky's, 53 years old, cannot tell us anything directly about the Middle East in 1990 — Saddam Hussein is not Chiang Kai-shek, nor is the USA now in the same position to Iraq and the Arab world as Japan to China in 1937. But there are, plainly, major elements now of old-fashioned economic imperialism in what America is doing. Trotsky can't analyse this concrete situation for us, we must do it for ourselves. Texts like the following help teach us how to make such an analysis, that is how to think as Marxists...

## Dear Comrade Diego Rivera:

During the past few days I have been reading some of the lucubrations of the Oehlerites and the Eiffelites (yes, there is a tendency of that sort!) on the civil war in Spain and on the Sino-Japanese War.

Lenin called the ideas of these people "infantile disorders". A sick child arouses sympathy. But twenty years have passed since then. The children have become bearded and even bald. But they have not ceased their childish babblings. On the contrary, they have increased all their faults and all their foolishness tenfold and have added ignominies to them. They follow us step by step. They borrow some of the elements of our analysis. They distort these elements without limit and counterpose them to the rest. They correct us. When we draw a human figure they add a deformity. When it is a woman they decorate her with a heavy moustache. When we draw a rooster, they put an egg under it. And they call all this burlesque Marxism and Leninism.

I want to stop to discuss in this letter only the Sino-Japanese War.

In my declaration to the bourgeois press, I said that the duty of all the workers' organisations of China was to participate actively and in the front lines of the present war against Japan, without abandoning, for a single moment, their own program and independent activity. But that is "social patriotism"! the Eiffelites cry. It is capitulation to Chiang Kai-shek! It is the abandonment of the principle of the class struggle! Bolshevism preached revolutionary defeatism in the imperialist war. Now, the war in Spain and the Sino-Japanese war are both imperialist wars. "Our position on the war in China is the same. The only salvation of the workers and peasants of China is to struggle independently against the two armies, against the Chinese army in the same manner as against the Japanese army." These four lines, taken from an Eiffelite document of September 10, 1937, suffice entirely for us to say: we are concerned here with either real traitors or complete imbeciles. But imbecility, raised to this degree, is equal to treason.

We do not and never have put all wars on the same plane. Marx and Engels supported the revolutionary struggle of the Irish against Great Britain, of the Poles against the Tsar, even though in these two nationalist wars the leaders were, for the most part, members of the bourgeoisie and even at times of the feudal aristocracy... at all events, Catholic reactionaries. When Abdel Krim rose up against France, the democrats and Social Democrats spoke with hate of the struggle of a "savage tyrant" against the "democracy". The party of Leon Blum supported this point of view. But we, Marxists and Bolsheviks, considered the struggle of the Rifians against imperialist domination as a progressive war. Lenin wrote hundreds of pages demonstrating the primary necessity of distinguishing between imperialist nations and the colonial and semi-colonial nations which comprise the great majority of humanity. To speak of "revolutionary defeatism" in general, without distinguishing between exploiter and exploited countries, is to make a miserable caricature of Bolshevism and to put that caricature at the service of the imperialists.

In the Far East we have a classic example. China is a semi-colonial country which Japan is transforming, under our very eyes, into a colonial country. Japan's struggle is imperialist and reactionary. China's struggle is emancipatory and progressive.

But Chiang Kai-shek? We need have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party, or the whole ruling class of China, just as Marx and Engels had no illusions about the ruling classes of Ireland and Poland. Chiang Kai-shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the independence of China. Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is probable. It is even inevitable. But today he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels, or complete imbeciles can refuse to participate in that struggle.

Let us use the example of a strike to clarify the question. We do not support all strikes. If, for example, a strike is called for the exclusion of Negro, Chinese, or Japanese workers from a factory, we are opposed to that strike. But if a strike aims at bettering — insofar as it can — the conditions of the workers, we are the first to participate in it, whatever the leadership. In the vast majority of strikes, the leaders are reformists, traitors by profession, agents of capital. They oppose every strike. But from time to time the pressure of the masses or of the objective situation forces them into the path of struggle.

Let us imagine, for an instant, a worker saying to himself: "I do not want to participate in the strike because the leaders are the agents of capital". This doctrine of this ultraleft imbecile would serve to brand him by his real name: a **strikebreaker**. The case of the Sino-Japanese War, is from this point of view, entirely analogous. If Japan is an imperialist country and if China is the victim of imperialism, we favour China. Japanese patriotism is the hideous mask of worldwide robbery. Chinese patriotism is legitimate and progressive. To place the two on the same plane and to speak of "social patriotism" can be done only by those who have read nothing of Lenin, who have understood nothing of the attitude of Bolsheviks during the imperialist war, and who can be compromised and prostitute the teachings of Marxism. The Eiffelites have heard that the social patriots accuse the internationalists of being the agents of the enemy and they tell us: "You are doing the same thing." In a war between two imperialist countries, it is a question neither of democracy nor of national independence, but of the oppression of backward non-imperialist peoples. In such a war the two countries find themselves on the same historical plane. The revolutionaries in both armies are

defeatists. But Japan and China are not on the same historical plane. The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of the economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression of the class struggle in China.

But can Chiang Kai-shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies and the internal betrayal. At a certain point, which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war, like war generally, is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle. It is necessary, however, to know when and how to transform political opposition into armed insurrection.

During the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 we attacked the policies of the Comintern. Why? It is necessary to understand well the reasons: The Eiffelites claim that we have changed our attitude on the Chinese question. That is because the poor fellows have understood nothing of our attitude in 1925-7. We never denied that it was the duty of the Communist Party to participate in the war of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of the South against the generals of the North, agents of foreign imperialism. We never denied the necessity of a military bloc between the CP and the Kuomintang. On the contrary, we were the first to propose it. We demanded, however, that the CP maintain its entire political and organisational independence, that is, that during the civil war against the internal agents of imperialism, as in the national war against foreign imperialism, the working class, while remaining in the front lines of the military struggle, prepare the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie. We hold the same policies in the present war. We have not changed our attitude one iota. The Oehlerites and the Eiffelites, on

the other hand, have not understood a single bit of our policies, neither those of 1925-7, nor those of today.

In my declaration to the bourgeois press at the beginning of the recent conflict between Tokyo and Nanking, I stressed above all the necessity of the active participation of revolutionary workers in the war against the imperialist oppressors. Why did I do it? Because first of all it is correct from the Marxist point of view; because, secondly, it was necessary from the point of view of the welfare of our friends in China. Tomorrow the GPU, which is in alliance with the Kuomintang (as with Negrin in Spain), will represent our Chinese friends as being "defeatists" and agents of Japan. The best of them, with Ch-en Tu-hsiu at the head, can be nationally and internationally compromised and killed. It was necessary to stress, energetically, that the Fourth International was on the side of China against Japan. and I added at the same time: without abandoning either their program or their independence.

The Eiffelite imbeciles try to jest about this "reservation". "The Trotskyists" they say, "Want to serve Chiang Kai-shek in action and the proletariat in words." To participate actively and consciously in the war does not mean "to serve Chiang Kai-shek" but to serve the independence of a colonial country in spite of Chiang Kai-shek. And the words directed against the Kuomintang are the means of educating the masses for the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek. In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence — to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek.. that is the only revolutionary policy. The Eiffelites counterpose the policy of "class struggle" to this "nationalist and social patriotic" policy. Lenin fought the abstract and sterile opposition all his life. To him, the interests of the world proletariat dictated the duty of aiding oppressed peoples in their national and patriotic struggle against imperialism. Those who have not yet understood that, almost a quarter of a century after the World War and twenty years after the October revolution, must be pitilessly rejected as the worst enemies on the inside by the revolutionary vanguard. This is exactly the case with Eiffel and his kind!

Leon Trotsky



# Why the Palestinians cheer Saddam

From page 4

superpowers based on the principle that they don't accept the acquisition of territory by force will be applied to Israel after the Kuwait crisis is over in one way or another.

The conflict is causing big problems for the Israeli left. Many of the more moderate Zionist left are very frightened and disappointed by the fact that the Palestinians are mostly supporting Saddam Hussein, and have denounced the Palestinians in a very negative way.

The crisis is not completely general — for example the Peace Now movement is withstanding it better than I expected, and still maintaining their contacts with the Palestinian leadership in East Jerusalem.

The Trotskyists — the RCL — organised a demo last week outside the defence ministry with the theme that Israel must not be involved in the war — it is not our war, and it is against the interests of the people of Israel. Rather than giving a big analysis of who is right and who is wrong in the war, the Americans or the Iraqis, they tried to tell the people in Israel that it's not our war and we should not get involved in it. They also raised the slogan of giving

gas masks to the Palestinians.

There is no-one backing Iraq on the Jewish side as far as I know, except a few individuals perhaps. Some individuals feel that whatever we say about Saddam Hussein, it is a sort of anti-colonialist war, but as far as I know there is no organised group on the Jewish side saying that.

I hope the outcome will be democratic elections in Kuwait; that annexation to Iraq will not remain, but that there will not be a restoration of the old regime. In fact that is the official position of the PLO. Yasser Arafat has been trying to mediate and to offer some such solution via an inter-Arab force going into Kuwait, but that has been very much obscured.

When people are holding a demonstration on the street, and especially when the demonstration is brutally dispersed by the Israeli army, they want quick answers, and they find a new champion in Saddam Hussein.

In several places in the West Bank and Gaza there were demonstrations where they had pictures of Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian and Iraqi flags.

There is a very interesting phenomenon in the Druze villages

in the Golan Heights. Those people have been resisting the annexation of the Golan Heights by Israel for many years. They have always maintained that they are Syrian citizens and want to be part of Syria. They have demonstrations with Syrian flags.

Usually they got much encouragement from the Syrian side of the border, and there were government-organised demonstrations on the Syrian side of the border.

Now in those villages there are pro-Iraqi demonstrations with Iraqi flags — and without encouragement.

The massive entry of American forces has aroused in the whole Arab world the memory of the big struggles against colonialism, for example in the struggle against British colonialism under the slogan of 'British bases out of Egypt'. For a whole generation of Egyptian nationalists that was the most important thing in their life.

I think that Arab nationalists feel that they struggled for two generations to get rid of foreign armies in the Arab world — they seemed to have won the struggle — suddenly there are again hundreds of thousands of Western soldiers on Arab soil.

# Support UN sanctions!

## LETTERS

**I am writing to express my disagreement with the position adopted in the pages of your paper on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.**

Despite all of your lengthy analysis, you do not advance any course of action leading to an Iraqi withdrawal. Apart from vague references to "workers solidarity" and the leaving of the situation up to "the Arabs" to resolve (the PLO? the Iranian mullahs? Hussein of Jordan?), you offer no concrete course of action that could possibly achieve your correct aim of driving the Iraqi armies out of Kuwait.

The correct course of action is to support the demand raised by Tony Benn in your pages for UN imposed economic sanctions.

The arguments used by Tom Rigby against this are unconvinc-

ing. His idea that the result of such sanctions would be to lead to the rise of a "new Hitler" is unwarranted and derogatory of the people of Iraq. Naturally we have no direct control over what might be the internal effects of successful sanctions but that is the case whether the sanctions are imposed by the UN or by the international labour movement.

The more telling argument is that concerning the extent to which the UN is a fig leaf for the self interest of the USA and Britain. No-one on the left would deny the imperialist ambitions of either of these two countries, but surely that is the strongest argument for strengthening the extent to which the whole operation is brought under UN control.

Your articles on the situation are long in analysis but short on solutions. Could you please try to be more explicit.

Ian McCalman  
Glasgow

# Don't back sanctions!

**Ian McCalman's letter on the Gulf crisis is surprising. Surprising in three ways.**

Firstly, for the assumption he makes that the UN can really function as some kind of coherent world government, separate from, independent of, and if necessary against, the imperialistic ambitions of the big powers.

There is little to suggest that the unanimous UN stand in favour of sanctions against Iraq is the precursor of a deeper and more sustained unity. No informed commentator in mainstream media seems to think this.

Already there is considerable division and differentiation within the UN over this issue. Jordan and Iran have moved considerably. Paradoxically, for Ian, few of the third world governments — whose influence in the UN Ian would presumably like to see strengthened — would now be prepared to back the military action needed to impose effective economic sanctions against Saddam.

Ian doesn't tell us how the UN could overcome the conflicts of interest between the world's divided ruling classes. The UN reflects these divisions, just as it also reflects — in its central activity — the hegemony of the US and its allies.

If Ian believes this is no longer the case then he should at least provide us with some evidence to back up his hopes.

This brings us to the second surprising feature of Ian's letter.

He makes little attempt to face up to the fact that effective sanctions necessarily imply a military blockade, which if imposed rigorously is likely to be taken by Saddam as an act of war. Nor does Ian face up to the argument that effective sanctions would inescapably mean grinding down and economically pulverising the people of Iraq. In effect Ian must want to see a mediaeval-style seige of Baghdad or for him sanctions have a purely symbolic value. If the latter is true then surely Ian has no concrete course of action that could possibly achieve the current aim of driving the Iraqi armies out of Kuwait?

Finally, Ian's letter is surprising for his discovery that the Iranian mullahs are Arabs. No, Ian, they are not.

In conclusion, Ian asks us to be more explicit as regards solutions. The short answer to that point is that there is no easy, or immediately obvious 'solution' to the Iraq occupation of Kuwait. The UN is no such solution; the American and British expeditionary forces will make things an awful lot worse.

The working class in the Arab world is very weak ideologically and organisationally; the best contribution we as socialists in Britain can make to overcome that problem is precisely to analyse the situation, to understand it and build a powerful movement in our own country calling for an end to the imperialist intervention. It's better to be long on analysis than long on daydreams

Tom Rigby  
Southwark



Saddam Hussein portrayed with Nebuchadnezzar, conqueror of the Jews. Good 'anti-imperialist' and 'anti-Zionist' coin for Socialist Worker?

# Socialist Worker backs Saddam's demagogy

By John O'Mahony

**I**n a situation like that now shaping up in the Gulf, there are two great dangers for socialists.

The first is a temptation to throw our hands in the air and shout "A plague on both your houses", faced as we are with a conflict between one of the most disgusting and savage regimes in the world, that of Saddam Hussein, and the US acting like an old-fashioned gunboat-imperialist power.

Such a position amounts to a collapse into world-weary uncomprehending pacifism. In a situation where the Iraqi-US conflict is igniting a new upsurge of long-dormant Arab nationalism, and thus raising far bigger questions than the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, such weary pacifism can quickly become a weary disdain for the Arab mobilisation against the US's occupation of Saudi Arabia and its preparations to blitz Iraq, and thus a sort of passive support for imperialism as events unfold towards war.

The second danger is the mirror-image of the first — a temptation to take sides with any enemy of US and British imperialism, with uncritical enthusiasm and mindless glorification of the "anti-imperialists" or those who are said to be playing "an anti-imperialist role".

That second phrase comes from *Socialist Worker*. *SW* has shifted dramatically as the crisis in the Gulf has unfolded. Former supporters of "anti-imperialist" Iran against what they called "imperialism's stooge" Iraq, they have had to make an undignified leap to support Iraq. But they have managed it, as they always do in situations like this.

They can barely contain their enthusiasm for the new and unexpected upsurge of anti-imperialism. They just love Saddam Hussein's demagogy! *SW* (18 August) says that Saddam

Hussein's "proposals this week for a negotiated end to the Gulf crisis went further. They included demands with which every socialist would be happy, for example, that Israel get out of the occupied territories of Palestine". The *SW* article does not risk dampening its readers' enthusiasm for the great anti-Zionist Saddam by mentioning the "demand" for Hussein's murdering army to stop shooting and gassing Kurds.

(There is another twist, too. Saddam Hussein calls on Israel to evacuate the West Bank and Gaza. *SW*, of course, calls for the complete destruction of Israel. *SW*'s vague formula about "occupied Palestine" is, so to speak, their way, of hiding from the reader Saddam's lack of "radical anti-Zionism".)

If the US does invade Iraq or try to bomb it into submission, then socialists should support Iraq, despite the butchering demagogue Saddam Hussein. The nitwits who run *SW* support Iraq for different reasons, as enthusiastic consumers of his demagogic anti-imperialism.

"His call for Israel to 'get out of the occupied territories of Palestine'... will increase his standing among those Arabs who have supported the intifada... So, the more US pressure builds up, the more Saddam will play an anti-imperialist role... This means he will increasingly have to rely on one of his few remaining strengths, the Arab masses' hatred of imperialism. In all of this Saddam should have the support of socialists". So socialists should endorse as good anti-imperialism the demagogic attempt to annex the Arab nationalism of the masses to the interests of the Iraqi state?

*SW* then says that Saddam is no "genuine leader" of Arab liberation. They recall that Saddam Hussein claimed that Iraq's attack on Iran would "pave the way for the liberation of Palestine". That was faking, "since the Iranian regime was clearly the big-

gest threat to US imperialism". Now things are different; though, they add, if Saddam survives he will revert to his old ways. "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..."

What? Socialists should feel we had suffered a defeat if Saddam Hussein were now to withdraw from Kuwait, without war? In retrospect we should endorse the invasion of Kuwait? Why? Because the US reaction magically turns the nasty little oil grab of the Iraqi sub-imperialist state into a good anti-imperialist action? Because if Iraq is now defeated, it will be a "victory for imperialism"? But peaceful retreat would mean the collapse of the brutal Saddam Hussein dictatorship!

Make sense of all that if you can! The explanation for *SW*'s nonsense is quite simple, though. They know what's what in Iraq and the Gulf as well as we do. Rightly, they oppose US and British imperialism. But *SW* also believes in bending before and reflecting waves of militancy — any militancy, industrial, "anti-imperialist", you name it! They bow to the success of Saddam Hussein's Arab nationalist demagogy. And then they think of "arguments" and reasonings to square off and justify their position.

The SWP is super-Leninist. They are "the Party" above all other parties. Yet Leninism is above all about the ideological struggle against bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideas — for example, against the sort of nameless, classless, nebulous "anti-imperialism" which Saddam Hussein exploits. *SW* bends before such ideas. It endorses them rather than fighting them, appealing to "militants" on their existing consciousness.

This is only the latest example. Whatever they call themselves, there are probably few groups of socialists more distant from Leninism than is the SWP!



Enforcing sanctions?

# Thriller without an ending

## CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Black Rainbow'

**B**lack Rainbow' zips along at a cracking pace, then falls apart in the last twenty minutes, when writer/director Mike Hodges gives up on the plot and the audience too.

It's a shame because the first two thirds of 'Black Rainbow' were scarily promising. But Hodges doesn't keep faith with the audience. He does the unthinkable; he sets up a thriller mystery of the occult, then backs out of giving the solution, after he's promised he will.

'Black Rainbow' stars Rosanna Arquette as Martha Travis, a phony medium who travels the country with her drunken bum father, Walter (Jason Robards), ripping off the suckers who want to communicate with the dead. Martha, who describes herself to her listeners as a "telephone exchange" between them and their loved ones, is tired of the act, and tired of life on the road.

But Walter isn't tired; he always wants more — more performances, more money. Martha begins to hate the way he's stolen her life. Robards, who's woken up from the sleepwalking act he did in 'Reunion', is surprisingly lively as the selfish, cajoling weakling. When he sweet-talks Martha, we can see why she can't break away from him, whatever the force of her stoked-up resentments. Weak as he is, he's too strong for her.

Martha's troubles start when a routine performance goes wrong. Instead of the fake messages pouring in her ear, she reveals a real message from the dead, a real connection with a man who died a violent death. Martha can see him, and the killer, and where the killer came from. She knows his face, his name.

There is only one problem; the man she saw murdered isn't dead. But when he is killed only hours later, Martha's troubles begin. The killer must silence her before the police can reach her.

That's just the start of the plot, but to say any more would spoil the fun of seeing it (and annoying as the end is, it's still worth seeing). It's enough to sav that Hodges pulls in police corruption, safety cutting capitalists, a hot-on-the-trail doubting-thomas journalist, a bit of witch-hunting, and a Mr Big to keep the story going.

All this should have added up to a good thriller, but Hodges never knits the strands together. They're left dangling, leading nowhere. It's all too scattered to make sense.

Martha also goes philosophical on us. Offended by the way her show has been turned into "entertainment", she is forced to speak the immortal lines: "I know now why we turn everything into entertainment. It's the only way we can handle the random stupidity of it all."

This may be Hodges speaking, aping an existentialist on a bad day, but it certainly isn't Martha, and from this moment, her role collapses. We don't know what she's thinking, or doing, or feeling, at a whole number of points crucial for the plot.

Martha's best moment is when she says if people weren't conned into belief in an after-life, they might get on with making life on earth, their "one shot", more bearable. Yet her whole act perpetuates that con. People don't



come to her for truth; they want comfort, soft words, rosy pictures.

And the end is merely absurd. It's out of Erik von Daniken, and the

people who gave you little green men from Mars. It makes no sense. If random stupidity exists, it's in this ending. When I saw the film,

audiences were leaving the theatre bewildered, cheated. And they were cheated.

## THES misrepresents views of the student left

By Mark Sandell, NUS NEC (personal capacity)

**L**ast week the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (THES) refused to print any letter which replied to a misrepresentation of the views of SO sellers Emma Colyer (NUS National Secretary) and Steve Mitchell (NUS Vice President FEUD).

The rubbish appeared in a THES lead article of 10 August and quoted Emma and Steve as saying "The general view is that we should

encourage students to take out a loan". Emma and Steve (Trotskyists, therefore left of centre) were apparently proof of a "new realism within the union".

The journalist concerned was THES hack and ex-student "independent" Sian Griffiths. Obviously Griffiths knows that the Left Unity position on loans, passed at Christmas '89 NUS Conference, was mainly written by Emma Colyer and can hardly be described as "new realist". Our policy calls for demonstrations, direct action and links with workers as part of a mass campaign to defeat loans.

At the same conference Left Unity's 'Don't Pay, Don't Collect

Poll Tax' policy was also passed.

Both sets of policy were passed despite the opposition of the Kinnockites.

Furthermore, at last week's NUS NEC Left Unity successfully led a challenge to the Kinnockites, proposing a campaign for grants not loans. The defeated position of the new realists was to run a mass take up of loans campaign.

At the same meeting the SWP put a position which concentrated solely on the Higher Education Sector; they did not propose to link the fight against loans to the explosive issues of Poll Tax and housing. The SWP are continuing to focus only on their base among the middle class radicals of the HE sector.

## An Argentine view of the Falklands war

### TV

By Lilian Thompson

**L**ast week TV screened the film 'Veronico Cruz', first shown in cinemas in January 1989.

It was a timely comment (if an unintentional one) on the looming war in the Gulf.

Set in the lunar landscape of Chorcan, a village in a high, remote province in Argentina, it charts the life of Veronico Cruz, born in 1964, a motherless boy whose father leaves him to the care of his grandmother when he leaves to seek work in the canefields. The father can no longer grub much of a living from the soil, and he flees the place that reminds him of his dead wife.

The grandmother blames education for tearing her son away from his home, and plans to keep the boy, Veronico, close by her side by leaving him unschooled and ignorant.

Veronico is a lonely boy, who sullenly tends his herd by day and dreams of his lost father by night.

His life begins to change when a new teacher comes to reopen the tiny long-closed village school. Veronico, now a teenage boy, longs for the school, but is forbidden to attend by his grandmother.

Eventually she relents and Veronico blossoms under the care of the teacher, who introduces Veronico to geography, and awakens in him a longing for the sea. Veronico's province is far from the sea, but he imagines the immense salt pans of his native mountains as an ancient sea, long vanished.

When Veronico's grandmother dies, he moves into the schoolhouse with the teacher, and the lonely boy and the teacher grow close.

In 1976 the army takes power through a coup. The new military dictatorship affects even this tiny, isolated community. The hitherto slobby police constable has to smarten up, spy on the villagers, and seize the teacher's books. One of the villagers, old Domingo, is forbidden to listen to foreign radio on his old crystal set.

The military have been interested in the whereabouts of Veronico's father, Castulo. The teacher too wants Veronico to see his father. Castulo has become a militant in the steelworks where he works. The military take a dim view of the teacher's enquiries. He's soon transferred from Chorcan, leaving Veronico alone again.

The teacher's new job is in a larger town. He settles down, likes his colleagues, but misses Veronico, whose correspondence is spasmodic. Then comes the Falklands War, which the teacher observes on TV screens in cafes and bars.

Argentina goes to war with Britain to seize some small islands 2,000 miles away from Veronico's village.

Like the coming of the junta, the war hits the poorest members of society hardest. Just as ordinary workers who oppose the regime's fantastic brutality join the ranks of the "disappeared" — like Castulo Cruz — so too do the children of workers disappear to act as cannon fodder in the war. The despair of parents over their slaughtered sons is everywhere, despite the nationalistic ballyhoo of the regime. The sinking of the General Belgrano alone claimed hundreds of lives.

Meanwhile the teacher frets over Veronico's silence and goes back to Chorcan to find him. He calls in on old Domingo, who had lived cut off from the world since the demise of his old radio. But Domingo has heard from Veronico, who had sent a photo, showing the now grown up lad with his workmates in his new job. With a sinking heart, the teacher reads the dedication on the picture, 'The lads from the Belgrano'. Veronico had got to sea after all.

# 'The North Sea will never be the same again'

**Socialist Organiser spoke to Laughlin and Bob who spent two weeks sitting in on the Brent Alpha platform following the first 24-hour strike**

**Bob:** The sit-in started because we were originally locked out and told to go home, which we refused to do. We wanted to go back to work. Because management wouldn't let us go back to work we decided to sit in.

Originally there were about 60 men two weeks ago, but we lost a lot straightaway because the company said, 'right boys, if you come to the beach by this deadline, you will be re-employable and on half-pay or standby pay'. Then it got to, 'listen boys we didn't really mean to sack you the last time, but if you come home this time you'll be re-employable'. And then we got another offer — 'if you come home this time by 12 o'clock, everything will be OK'.

**Loughlin:** We had a 24-hour stoppage. They let two or three people go back to work but locked the majority out. That is why we sat in.

**Bob:** It seems it's Shell's turn to take a hard line. BP did it last year, Shell could be doing it this year.

**Loughlin:** I was on the OILC standing committee last year when we did a six-day sit-in and it was 'Oh boys we are Shell, we're being good to you, we are treating you fair and we can't control BP'. Now it's Shell who are wielding the big stick.

Shell have their favourites. One of the men they let back had already worked three weeks. He did four weeks and that is against Shell policy.

**Bob:** The psychological warfare was very heavy. We were threatened with the police.

**Loughlin:** Threats that we'd never work offshore again. That we'd never even work on the beach ever again. They said they'd drag us screaming onto choppers but as we are helideck crew we knew the pilot would never take off if you were having to be restrained in any way.

**Bob:** For a couple of days we couldn't telephone our families.

**Loughlin:** After the Shell men kicked up a stink about this they put on one phone. If you wanted to phone home you were sitting in a queue of 30 or 40 people. And even then they [Shell] were listening in.

They were even cutting us off from union reps. We would phone our union offices and the lines would go down. I'm a shop steward for the T&G. I would phone the T&G office and next minute the line was down.

**Bob:** A statement from the managing director of Shell said words to the effect: 'they have cut off certain numbers because they were deemed as unnecessary calls'.

All the lines between platforms sitting in were cut. Our information came from friendly Shell guys who could get through to the OILC control room, or radio men. We held meetings twice a day to keep people informed.

**Loughlin:** They tried the usual tricks. They told us we were the only people sitting in on Brent field. But we heard that last year, so didn't believe them.

**Bob:** The average Shell man was definitely behind us. They were always asking how we were getting on. You felt they were concerned for you. A lot of them used to work for contractors.

Safety has definitely got worse. The platforms are deteriorating, and not enough money is being invested. OK, they're putting in these new valves, but that's not to save our necks, that's to save the platform!

**Loughlin:** I'll give you an example. I got a safety award for reporting part of the L3 deck was subsiding with the weight of the well. The actual deck plates and the beams that the deck plates sit on were subsiding so the deck



was giving way. That was three years ago and it's still not been repaired. And I got a safety award for telling them about it!

**Bob:** I was a safety rep as well and I was put on a Shell safety course. It was amazing — just a Shell and BP public relations course, that's all it was. They cancelled 'any other business' at the safety meetings because there were safety points being brought up!

Management went to war psychologically. Everything that's happened out there has happened in a small area with a group of men and it's management fighting the boys.

**Loughlin:** Ronnie McDonald sums it up in one sentence. The North Sea will never be the same again, never. He's got the majority of the boys behind him. The boys are coming out signing their bits of paper and they're down on strike again. If I get a job I will be going out signing my bit of paper and I will be downing tools the minute he says so.

**Bob:** Me too. I look forward to getting back. Give me a couple of days with my family and I'll be back out there.

The companies have got to realise that Ronnie McDonald is a man that we listen to and not the unions so much, let Ronnie listen to the unions and take their advice. We listen to Ronnie and that's it.

**Loughlin:** Ronnie's got the power for the simple reason that he's got our interests at heart and he is fighting for us.

**Bob:** And we believe that he believes in us.

**Loughlin:** We have a levy of £5 a trip which we pay to the OILC because we believe in it. My wages have more or less doubled since last year but it's not wages it's about. It's conditions and safety.

**Bob:** Our demands will be met. All we want is union recognition. We're not asking for a million dollars a week, we're not even asking for money.

## POLL TAX

Islington Council has decided to prosecute poll tax non-payers, beginning with half a dozen Labour councillors (including the mayor, Maureen Leigh) and the MP for Islington North, Jeremy Corbyn.

The rebel councillors are an embarrassment to the high-flying Margaret Hodge, leader of Labour-led Islington Council. She has already supported moves to illegally withdraw attendance and subsistence allowances.

The councillors are not setting up a separate defence campaign, but hope that the publicity generated by their case will give a boost to the existing anti-poll tax campaigns in the borough. They are encouraging anyone who sympathise

with them to join their local anti-poll tax unions.

Meanwhile, Islington North Labour Party has passed a policy of support for mass non-payment. This is also a development that can strengthen the borough-wide campaign.

The next meeting of Islington Against the Poll Tax is Thursday 30 August, Islington Town Hall, Upper St, 7.30.

**B**olton magistrates started taking people to court over the poll tax last Thursday 16th August.

One of the Anti-Poll-Tax Group organisers Richard Bircumshaw was arrested at 4.30 am after police broke into his home. He had an outstanding fine of £80. During the break-in the police confiscated placards and leaflets which were to be used later that day outside the magistrates court. Bolton magistrates intended taking 250 non-payers a day. Last Thursday only 20 turned up and only 2 were heard, the first case taking over 2½ hours.

## IN BRIEF

Over 1,000 workers of ITN — covering nearly all grades — are to ballot on strike action after rejecting management's 4.5% pay offer — less than half the rate of inflation.

The offer was raised to 6% but the ballot will go ahead.

A similar ballot is to go ahead at Central TV where the unions

have rejected an 8% pay offer. According to a CBI survey, pay settlements for the second quarter of 1990 are averaging 9.1%, well below the current inflation rates.

The first strikes in the 143-year history of the Prudential building society took place last month. Action spread after 50 staff in Leeds and York were suspended for taking one-day strike action in protest at management plans to decentralise bargaining.

## A clear choice in the TGWU

**B**allotting is now taking place for the post of Assistant General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

The two main contenders are the present incumbent Eddie Haigh — who is also the T&G representative on the Labour Party NEC, where he voted to back the ban on Socialist Organiser.

Standing against him is left-wing candidate John Farrell, member of the union for 24 years and convenor at Vauxhall Motors, Ellesmere Port for nine. Farrell says: "A proud claim is that friend and detractor alike call me a glorified shop steward."

T&G rules do not allow "electioneering". Nevertheless, it is good to see that T&G members will be given a clear choice for once. Ballot papers must reach the Electoral Reform Society by 14 September.

## PSA: build up the action!

**By John Maloney, CPSA PSA, London**

**T**he dispute in the Property Services Agency (PSA) is escalating.

Senior management had hoped to convert the Agency, which is responsible for constructing and maintaining government buildings, to a private company by 1 April 1991.

This would have meant thousands of job losses and a significant worsening of pay and conditions for the remaining staff.

But things haven't been going management's way.

Despite the fact that PSA is not one

of the best organised or strongest sections of the civil service, the two main unions involved — CPSA (lower grades) and NUCPS (support grades and junior/middle management) — decided to fight.

A one-day national strike (the first to be held in the Agency) has been followed by all-out selective strikes in Leeds, Edinburgh, Croydon, and Hastings. On 20 August members went on strike in Central London.

All this has made senior management shift ground, and they may offer a deal to the unions. Unfortunately the deal is likely to be designed to play off one union against the other. NUCPS will probably be offered a much better deal than CPSA.

The task for activists is clear. Build up the action, no to any deal that breaks the unity between the unions!

## Greenwich strike continues

### TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

**By Tony Dale**

**G**reenwich was hit by a council-wide strike by NALGO members on Friday 17 August. The one-day strike was in support of 170 housing workers who have been on strike since the beginning of May.

The housing strike was sparked by a dispute over pay and conditions of staff involved in poll tax collection. The London-wide Whitley Council ruled in favour of the strikers' regrading claim.

Since then management have turned the dispute into a lock-out. Management placed conditions on the return-to-work agreement which were totally unacceptable.

Management want to discipline 15 strikers, transfer two managers to different offices, and they are also demanding job description changes.

Since mid-July the Council has refus-

ed to shift ground. They are now involved in a union-busting exercise. With the Council refusing to agree a no victimisation return-to-work agreement, NALGO must look at stepping up the pressure by widening the dispute.

**By Sarah Cotterill**

**O**ne hundred social workers in Rochdale are on strike after refusing to cover for vacant posts.

Rochdale Council froze all posts after being poll tax-capped.

The walk-out was sparked when a social worker was sent home on 3 August without pay after refusing to take on extra work.

Social workers are currently being balloted to make the action official. The Branch Executive is recommending a 'yes' vote.

Management have taken a heavy handed stance — they are refusing to negotiate and have stopped this month's wages.

## TUC AGAINST THE POLL TAX

A Socialist Organiser pamphlet 60 pence

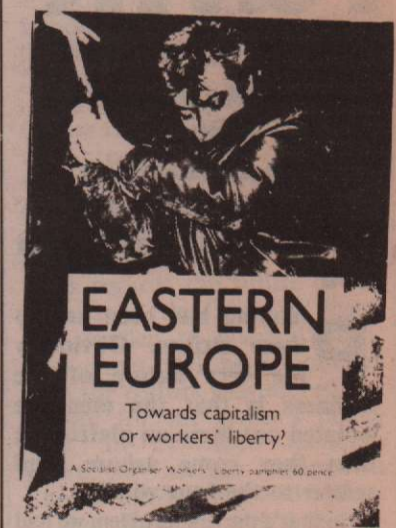
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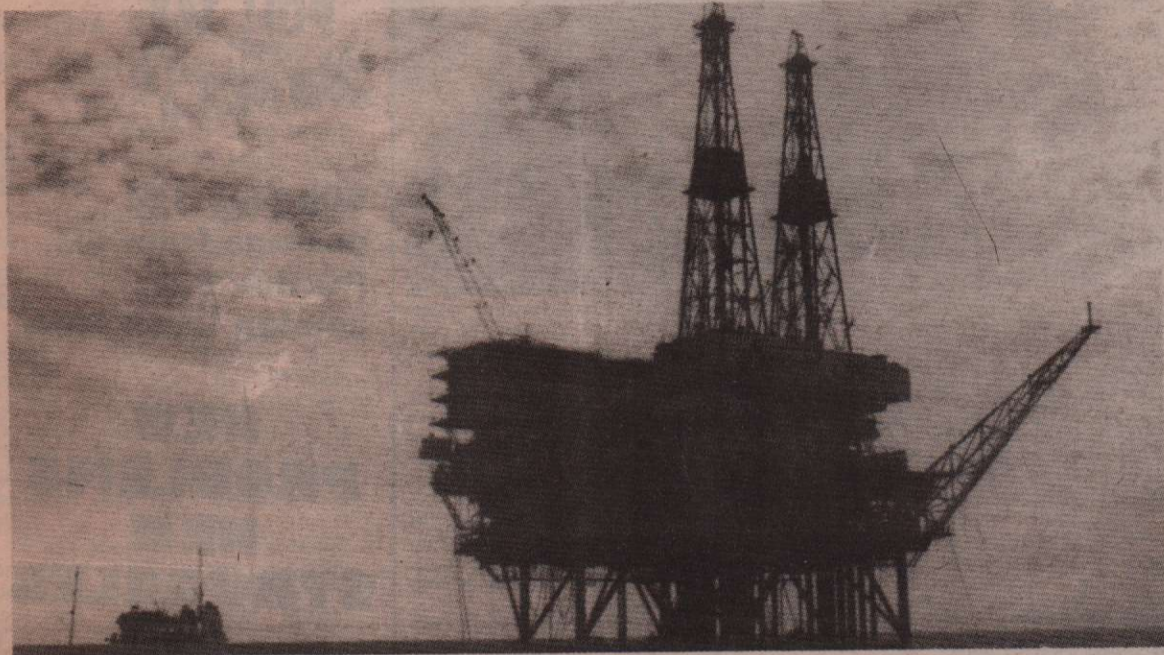
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# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER



Oil workers' leader speaks out:

# 'We are the organised rank and file'

**Ronnie McDonald of the Oil Industry Liaison Committee describes the state of the action in the North Sea**



Ronnie McDonald

**P**lanning has been key to these strikes. Obviously the very nature of the business is that the men are isolated out there on platforms; then they come ashore, and scatter to the four winds.

So that's the first problem we had to tackle and we did that by regular mass meetings throughout the country with a growing schedule over the winter: Glasgow, Newcastle, Middlesborough, Aberdeen, Dundee, occasionally in Liverpool. But the meetings have been the key.

Then we had to look at the legal situation and put together a set of tactics that would be effective and sustainable. Hence the offshore sit-in. And there's no doubt in my mind that that's delivered. The tactics are sound and effective.

There are similarities between us and the tube workers last year as far as the trade union laws are concerned. We did it last year simultaneously with the tube drivers, by the way, but we didn't get any publicity. We've always said we'll never get anywhere in the North Sea until we affect the interests of the Home Counties middle classes. And we are on the verge of actually doing that at this minute.

We've no constitution and no rule book. We've no membership rule. The OILC standing committee

is made up of the offshore workers who want to progress this fight and are committed to actually doing something practical. Some are shop stewards, some are spokesmen, some are not, but they are all active. We've a completely ad hoc organisation and have no bureaucracy — it's as simple as that.

Communications during the strike are very important. A member of the committee created the *Blow Out* newspaper, and I think that's one of the most significant things to come out of this struggle.

We issue hand-outs and information to keep the men informed of what we're doing.

We get a lot of harassment from management. SEDCO, for in-

# Oil

stance, have banned our publications on their rigs.

We've had support from other workers: token industrial action from men at Davey of Dundee, St Fergus gas terminal, the lads in two major contracts on the Clyde at Coulport and Faslane. We've had faxes of support expressing solidarity from Norway, Sweden, Holland, Trinidad. It's been very, very encouraging.

The local councillors, trades council and MPs should be commended on their support.

Obviously there's got to be complete re-rigging of the whole trade union laws. I think we should go down the European road of clearly spelt out rights at work. A positive set of rights.

The purpose of this dispute is to deal the official unions a hand at the table and we feel that we've come pretty far down that road and have given them a bargaining position. And there comes a time when we will have to hand the baton over to them.

But there's no way the OILC will ever be out of the frame. We are, after all, the organised rank and file offshore from members of all the unions. So we can make sure all our demands are met.

**More on the oil rigs see page 11**

## Help us fight Kinnock's ban!

By Martin Thomas

**E**nd the Ban!', the broad committee against the Labour Party National Executive's ban on *Socialist Organiser*, is running a three-pronged campaign in the five or six weeks to Labour Party conference in Blackpool in October.

A mailing has gone out to all CLPs and hundreds of identified supporters of the campaign. Telephone contacts have so far identified over one hundred CLPs in which activists will be moving support for the campaign, in one form or another, at September Labour Party meetings.

Local protest meetings — which have been held successfully so far in Nottingham, York, Sheffield, Manchester, North London and South London — are helping to get more contacts.

The timing of the NEC's decision made it impossible to submit motions to Conference about the ban. A few amendments have been submitted before their deadline on 17 August.

Labour Parties and trade unions are being asked to mandate their delegates to support the amendments and the reference back of the relevant section of the NEC Report. And they are also being asked to pass emergency motions.

*Socialist Organiser* has been denied the most elementary justice. The NEC has said that our organisation, the Socialist Organiser Alliance, is outlawed — but they have never said what specifically is objectionable about it — neither in charges before the decision, nor even in explanation after it. Still less did they tell us what the evidence was for whatever they found objectionable, or grant us a hearing in which the evidence could be examined critically.

We wrote to the NEC months ago offering to consider any changes to our way of organising they wanted to propose. We said that as far as we could see our way of organising would qualify the Socialist Organiser Alliance for the Labour Party's register of approved groups, and if not we would adjust accordingly! No response!

We consider the whole pro-

ceedings unjust, and an alarming precedent for the future. But the outcome is that, until Conference or the NEC reverses this unjust ban, the only way we seem to have of continuing to publish in the Labour Party as a critical-minded socialist newspaper based on Marxist class struggle politics is to dissolve the Socialist Organiser Alliance altogether.

Dissolving the Socialist Organiser Alliance should close the whole affair for the time being. The Labour Party rules specifically say that no disciplinary action should be taken against members merely because of the beliefs or opinions they express. However, such has been the way that Joyce Gould and the NEC have proceeded so far that we cannot be sure of that. We are therefore asking CLPs and affiliated trade unions to submit emergency motions for the Labour Party's Annual Conference in Blackpool in October which take note of the SOA disbanding and confirm *Socialist Organiser's* right to continue publishing.

**More on the ban page 2**

## Polish socialists send solidarity to SO

**C**omrades, in connection with difficulties created by the leadership of the Labour Party, we would like to express our full solidarity with sympathisers of *Socialist Organiser*.

Both you and we recognise democracy inside the labour movement, its multi-tendency organisations, the possibilities of democracy from below and free political debate as a basic value of public life.

With our solidarity in a common struggle for workers' liberty, East and West.

Jozef Pinior  
Milka Tyszkiewicz  
Jaroslaw Wardega  
Socialist Political Centre  
Wroclaw  
Poland

## What you can do

- Circulate the leaflet which 'End the Ban' has produced to explain the arguments. Order copies from the address below. (Please send stamps to cover postage: 37p for 20, 62p for 50, £1.25 for 100).
- Invite a speaker from 'End the Ban!' to your ward, CLP or trade union branch.
- Mandate your CLP delegate to support reference back of the section on the ban in the NEC Report at Labour Party Annual Conference.
- Ask your CLP to adopt an emergency motion on the ban for Labour Party Conference. This must begin with a reference to something which happened after 17 August.
- Move resolutions in your trade union that the union should support reference back of the NEC Report on the ban.
- Get together with others in your area to organise a local 'End the Ban!' meeting with the widest possible platform and sponsorship.
- Come to the national 'Rally against the Ban!' on 1 September.

**RALLY AGAINST THE BAN**  
**Saturday 1 September,**  
**2pm to 5pm**

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

All Labour Party members welcome  
Contact: *End the Ban!* c/o Martin Thomas,  
12a Canonbury St, London N1 2TD.