

I was a British soldier



page 5



Labour against the war

page 4

For Workers' Liberty!



For socialist renewal!

Rosa Luxemburg: socialism or barbarism?



centre pages



Birmingham 6 page 2

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

Labour's anti-war voice

US sets out to conquer Iraq

Stop the



The killing fields of Kuwait

slaughter!

We now have reports that the US is planning military governments in southern Iraq on the same lines as in Germany and

By Eric Heffer MP
Italy at the end of the Second World War.
It should be no surprise.

There is clearly a hidden agenda in this war, in line with the new imperialism the US is now developing.
The US wants to get back

in to the Middle East as an imperial power — and in that they are fully supported by the British government.
They want to maintain a

dominant influence there, and control of oil and the natural resources of the area.

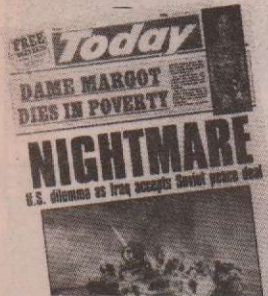
Turn to page 2

Troops out of the Gulf!

Freedom? Democracy? Liberation? Justice?

Tell it to the Birmingham Six!

The lie machine



For the tabloid press, when a peace deal looks possible in the Gulf, that's a "nightmare". Peace is a "nightmare". War is glorious. Martial law in Kuwait, and imperialist conquest in Iraq, in liberation. Imperialism is liberation. War is peace. Oppression is freedom. Lies are truth...



Just like the Westerns on TV, isn't it — for the editors safe in their London offices. On the ground it is death and agony.



They said the war was to "liberate Kuwait". Then when Iraq does order its army out of Kuwait, it's "No to Saddam Pullout Sham!"

Learning the trade

We organised an extra SO sale in Islington, north London, last weekend, in order to introduce some new SO supporters to the socialist paper-seller's craft.

Some of them were star performers at the first try, much better at the job than the old-timer who was supposed to be instructing them. Accosting passers-by systematically, and asking them "for or against the war?", they got into lots of lively arguments and sold a fair few papers.

All of our small team had been nervous about selling SO on the street. Who knows who might come up to them and challenge them to argument on some issue they knew nothing about?

In fact they all found that they managed pretty well in the arguments that actually came up.

We still need more sellers to help us get the socialist and anti-war message out — a lot more. The pro-war, pro-capitalist message has the power of huge TV transmitters and giant printing presses: it gets hammered home not by logic but by sheer force and volume.

Our counterweight must be, and can only be, the enthusiasm, conviction, energy and commitment of our socialist paper sellers.

If you would like to help sell SO, write to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, or phone Martin Thomas on 071-639 7965.

The Gulf War is about democracy and freedom, they tell us. Tell it to the Birmingham Six!

Sixteen years they have been in jail for something they didn't do. They are in jail still, awaiting release, as

we go to press, though the Crown has admitted that they are innocent.

They had confessions beaten out of them by policemen. The courts were presented with unchallengeable but false forensic evidence by police scientists who were either incompetent, or malicious, or

both. The judges consistently refused appeals, not wanting to admit they had been wrong.

The police, the scientists, and the judges played god — and six innocent men have had 16 years hacked out of the centre of their lives.

If Britain is democratic and liberated, then someone

should have gone from the Government to the jail and told the Six about it a long time ago.

Better still, someone should have told the torturing police and the lying or incompetent "experts". They should have told the great judge Lord Denning, who said publicly that it would

have been better if they had been hanged and their "cases" buried with their bodies in the corner of some prison yard, instead of humiliating and discrediting the British police and judicial system.

Freedom? Democracy? Go tell it to the Birmingham Six and their families.

Iranian oilworkers win all of strike demands

An Iranian socialist reports

According to the latest information from Iran, the oilworkers have won, and the government has accepted all their demands.

By the end of the strike, workers and employees of Iran's Oil and Gas company as well as workers in the petrochemical industry and some petrol stations were involved.

A day before the workers' ultimatum expired, Rafsanjani went on television to "express his gratitude" to oilworkers and the government issued a statement and accepted the demands:

- a pay rise of 2000 toman for all workers;
- housing loans to rise to 750,000 toman (from 400,000 toman) at reduced rates of interest;
- allocation of special land for workers' accommodation in Tehran (next to the workers' club and in Janat Abad);
- retired workers will be able to benefit from the industry's special health care and insurance;
- annual grades will go up by 14 toman a day instead of 7 toman a day;
- New Year bonuses increased from one month's salary to two months', payable in February (a month before the Iranian New Year);
- the government promises to release all imprisoned workers.

However, the demand for food distribution was rejected on the grounds that the government did not possess sufficient amounts.

Two important issues dominate recent developments. For the first time workers in a nation-wide industry with tens of thousands of employees were able to coordinate their actions, find communication links, and show to the government the power of a united workforce.

The victory of oilworkers will inevitably encourage many other workers to demand better wages and conditions. Many will not have the strength and organisation of the oilworkers, however their united action can force the government to back down.

For more information contact the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI), BM CARI, London WC1N 3XX.



Defend freedom of speech!

At a London magistrates court on 19 February, Spartacist supporter Alastair Green pleaded "not guilty" to public order charges, brought by the police for chanting slogans for the defeat of US/British imperialism and defence of Iraq on the 2 February anti-war

demonstration.

The case will go to trial on 23 April, and the Partisan Defence Committee, which is running Green's defence campaign, is appealing for support from the labour movement.

Statements of support are needed from trade unions, Labour Parties and prominent individuals. Information from PDC, BCM Box 4896, London WC1N 3XX (071 485 1396).

Stop the slaughter!

From front page

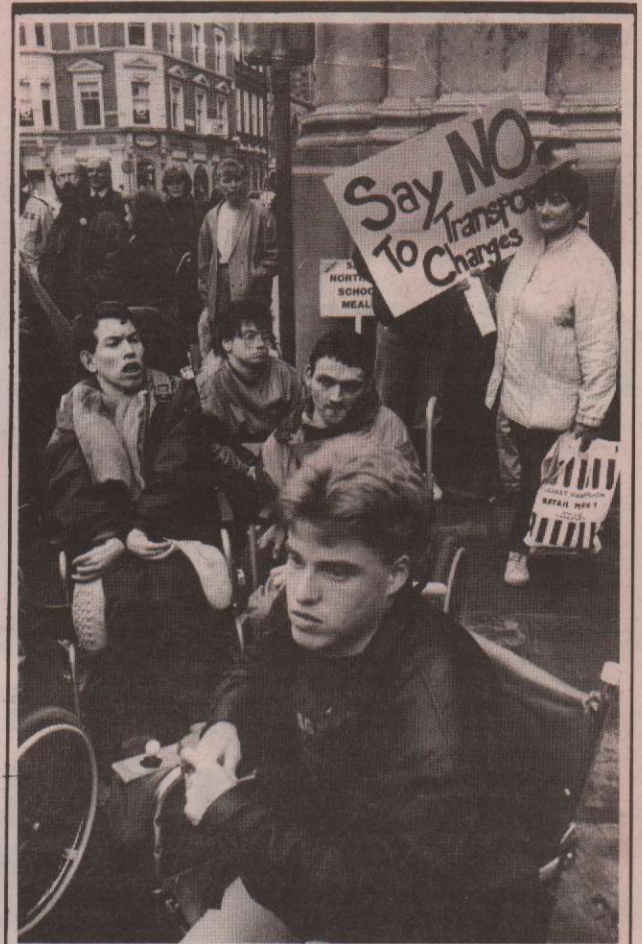
That is why they did not want a peaceful settlement. They did not want Iraq to withdraw peacefully.

They have been going on about the orders Saddam was issuing at the very time the US deadline ran out. In fact there were deliberations going on at the United Nations on the Soviet peace plan then

— and the US just ignored them.

The US had clearly planned the invasion of Iraq long in advance, and they had no intention of being deflected from it.

It's about time these issues were brought out and exposed. Imperialist oil interests are the real issue behind the conflict — not the talk about freedom and democracy and the rights of Kuwait.



Protest against cuts in Northampton

Protest in Northampton on February 21 against cuts in local government spending. In particular the disabled are being forced to pay for transport. Photo: John Harris

Fund drive passes £15,000

Our drive to raise £25,000 tops £15,000 this week.

£12,655 of that represents the capitalised equivalent of regular monthly contributions received

through our "200 Club", and £2,470 cash donations.

Contributors to the "200 Club" pay a fixed amount monthly, and get a corresponding number of chances in a monthly draw

for a £100 prize.

We need more contributors, and we need more cash. Donations to, and "200 Club" forms from, SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

George Krasso

By Mark Osborn

The Hungarian anti-Stalinist George Krasso died on February 12, aged 58.

Socialist Organiser supporters might well remember George, who spoke at the founding conference of the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) on 7 November 1987.

George Krasso had been a Hungarian Communist Party member, purged in the early '50s and who took part in the '56 uprising. He was jailed for his part in the rising.

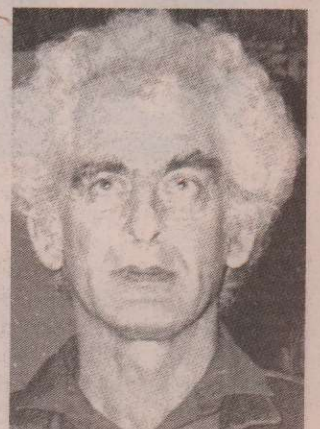
He spent a number of years in

Britain and only returned to Hungary a year or so ago. While in Britain he worked fantastically hard to help the Hungarian opposition, running a regular information service "Hungarian October".

Although I never found out exactly what he thought (he certainly loved his country and hated the Stalinists) he was always helpful and happy to work with anyone who could help the Hungarian opposition.

I last saw George Krasso in his unbelievably chaotic flat as he gave me some addresses for comrades to visit in Hungary.

What remains of the Hungarian Stalinists will certainly remember him — and we



George Krasso

should not forget him for exactly the same reason.



Another Palestinian victim of Israeli brutality in the occupied territories

Two peoples — two states

For the Palestinians!

The Palestinian people are set to emerge from the Gulf war high on the list of losers.

The Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza have given solid and enthusiastic backing to Saddam Hussein. So has the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The Palestinians have backed Saddam against the West. With diplomatic demurrals, they backed his annexation of Kuwait. They looked forward eagerly to the blows he promised to rain down on Israel, with troops, Scud missiles, and poison gas.

For the great majority of Palestinians, a new pan-Arab saviour, a new Nasser, had arisen, who would champion them and "liberate Palestine". Saddam would settle with Israel. The Palestinians' long and unequal struggle with Israel was about to be transformed.

It is being transformed, but for the worse. From this war, the Palestinians have so far reaped the bitter hostility of the Arab governments participating in the anti-Iraq coalition. They have forfeited rich subsidies from Saudi Arabia and the oil sheiks. They have suffered a crushing blow in the propaganda

war.

For years now Israel has been losing the world-wide propaganda war. Its savage tactics against the Palestinian intifada have provoked very widespread revulsion. Even Israel's US backers had distanced themselves more and more from the Israeli government, and were going along with calls for a peace conference and an Israeli settlement with the Palestinians.

Now the Palestinians are mired in Saddam Hussein's mud; Israel is a rehabilitated, albeit unofficial, member of the grand coalition. After the military power of Iraq has been destroyed, Israel will be the region's military superpower.

Non-combatant Israel, facing indiscriminate Scud attacks with restraint, has won widespread sympathy; the Palestinian cheerleaders for Saddam (and even for Saddam's atrocities against Kuwaitis and Israelis) have forfeited much of the world sympathy their people had so belatedly won in the last few years.

Now can the Palestinians hope that, nevertheless, the self-interest of the likely victors in the Gulf war will lead them to seek justice for the Palestinians.

The Arab governments may seek some progress in Palestine, but no reliance can be placed on them. On the contrary. Time and again the Arab rulers have betrayed — and massacred — the Palestinians.

They would like to eliminate Israel, but they know they can't. They would like a West Bank/Gaza Palestinian state in the Israeli-occupied territories; but Israel under its present government, or any other government likely in the short term, simply will not agree to it, and the Arab rulers are "realists".

The US is likely to stand by Israel. American politics works by horse-trading and lobbying. Vote-generating campaign money from competing ethnic and other networks controls Congressional votes on important issues. The Jewish community is among the most powerful of the competing ethnic

political groups; the pro-Israel lobby is one of the most determined and powerful in American politics. The Jewish community had been split for and against the existing Israeli government and its West Bank/Gaza policy. It is split no longer.

Even should Bush and his team of gung-ho imperialists sincerely want to impose a new and more rational blueprint on the Middle East, they would face tremendous resistance and difficulties inside American politics. The peculiar nature of American pseudo-democracy will make it cripplingly difficult for the US ruling class to pursue long-term enlightened and rational politics in the Middle East.

Given the prevailing attitudes on the left, it is necessary here to underline what we are, and are not, saying. It is not a matter of a "Jewish conspiracy", but of the American political system within which the Zionist lobby works, as other ethnic-political associations work: for example, the Irish lobby was powerful enough in 1920 to get a resolution recognising the Irish Republic, fighting a war with Britain, through the House of Representatives.

The pressures and realpolitik of today will impel Bush to "punish" the Palestinians and destroy the PLO.

In the immediately foreseeable future, the Palestinians stand to lose on all fronts.

This makes it all the more necessary that the serious left should raise the question of the rights of the Palestinians, and insistently advocate the only possible democratic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: two states for the two peoples.

Socialist Organiser has argued against those on the left who deny Israel's right to exist because it ill-treats and oppresses the Palestinians. Israel's right to exist, we have insisted, cannot be conferred or denied according to what we think of the Israelis' behaviour.

Equally, the right of the Palestinians to self-determination in their own state cannot and should not depend on their "good behaviour"!

In 1948 the Palestinians backed the Arab armies which invaded the newly-independent state of Israel. For nearly 20 years after that, they all but disappeared as a political entity. Their organisations looked to the Arab governments, especially Nasser's Egypt, to solve their problems.

"What Yasser Arafat — with the backing of Palestinian public opinion, it seems — has done with his reliance on Saddam Hussein is to destroy all that and turn the Palestinian political clock back 23 years to the days of stark dependency on such as Nasser. The price that the enemies of the PLO and Palestinians will try to extract will be a terrible one."

Only when those governments had been humiliated by Israel in the June 1967 war did the PLO begin to act as an independent force, the Palestinians to gain something like political autonomy.

Desperate Palestinian terrorism and many disasters — in Jordan, in Lebanon — followed. Four years ago, a mass people's resistance erupted in the occupied territories. It put militarily-powerful Israel on the political and moral defensive.

What Yasser Arafat — with the backing of Palestinian public opinion, it seems — has done with his reliance on Saddam Hussein is to destroy all that and turn the Palestinian political clock back 23 years to the days of stark dependency on such as Nasser. The price that the enemies of the PLO and the Palestinians will try to exact will be a terrible one.

But, to repeat, the Palestinians'

right to self-determination cannot be cancelled out by the criminal foolishness of their bourgeois leaders — not now, any more than in the '30s and '40s.

The left must defend the Palestinians. It will not be able to defend the Palestinians if it persists in its long-time advocacy of the most boneheaded and bloodthirsty Arab irredentism, with denial of the right of the Jewish state to exist at its centre.

Irredentism — the drive by a nation to annex and grab outlying territories and enclaves in its sphere — cannot be squared with socialism or democracy. It means suppression of minorities and insoluble, unending conflicts between neighbouring nations. Israeli irredentism is reactionary; so is Arab irredentism.

In the period ahead, such politics will be not only wrong in principle, but also suicidally stupid in terms of the realities the Palestinians are likely to face.

It must be two states for the two peoples: self-determination for both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs.

Advisory Editorial Board

Graham Bash
Vladimir Derer
Terry Eagleton
Jatin Haria (Labour Party Black Sections)
Eric Heffer MP
Dorothy Macedo
Joe Marino
John Mellroy
John Nicholson
Peter Tatchell

Members of the Advisory Committee are drawn from a broad cross-section of the left who are opposed to the Labour Party's witch-hunt against Socialist Organiser. Views expressed in articles are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Advisory Editorial Board.

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

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

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

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

Party activists fight Labour leadership on Gulf war

Not like Kinnock

By Cate Murphy, Secretary, Labour Against the War

Is Neil Kinnock the leader of the Labour Party? To listen to him over the six and a half months, so far, of the Gulf crisis, you would think he was a particularly shameless careerist Tory back-bencher, devoting all his energies and talents to applause, support, and flattery for the Tory leadership.

Wherever Major and Hurd go, he follows. Send British troops? Certainly! Rush to war? Yes sir! Bomb Iraq back into the 19th century? Of course. Dismiss Iraqi offers to pull out of Kuwait? At once! Launch the land war? When you say the word boss. Conquer southern Iraq? Indeed.

That's Neil Kinnock's version of Labour policy. At rank and file

level it is different.

Our newly-launched 'Labour Against the War' campaign is winning support fast. Local 'Labour Against the War' meetings have been held, or planned, in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Manchester, Nottingham, Northampton, Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Haringey and many other places.

All Constituency Labour Parties and all organisations affiliated to the Labour Party, including the trade unions, have been mailed, and we're already starting to receive sponsorships.

'Labour Against the War' supporters will be active at the forthcoming Labour Regional Conferences — in London on 1-2 March, and in Scotland and the North West on 9-10 March — petitioning and leafletting. Emergency motions against the war are going to all these conferences, and it is likely that Scotland and London, at least, will vote against the war (unless the mo-

tions are ruled out of order).

'Labour Against the War' fringe meetings are planned in the North West and Scotland.

'Labour Against the War' is not just about resolution-passing in the Labour Party, and we're also seeking to mobilise Labour Party members for the demonstrations against the war. We will have our own banner on the march in London on 2 March.

Whatever happens on the battlefield in the next days or weeks, there will be a job to be done in the Labour Party, calling MPs to account, fighting for Labour to oppose the conquest of Iraq and permanent US military bases in the Gulf, and drawing the lessons. 'Labour Against the War' will do the job!

For more information, speakers, and copies of our petition, contact us c/o Basement Office, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 2HE. Or phone 071 277 7217.



Ron Todd — lifelong CND member — has been "studiously silent" on the war

Bureaucrats on a war footing

That powerful unofficial campaigning group, 'General Secretaries for War', has swung into action to ensure that the British trade union movement remains solidly behind US/British imperialism in the Gulf.

I'm being unfair, of course: most union bureaucrats are not especially concerned about the war, one way or another. What they are concerned about is not embarrassing Neil Kinnock or (as they see it) jeopardising Labour's election chances in any way. Perhaps I should have called them 'General Secretaries for Kinnock at Any Price'.

The situation in the TGWU is instructive: here we have a General Secretary, Ron Todd, who is a life-long member of CND and whose initial reaction to the TUC's press statement backing the war as "a positive development" was (by all accounts) one of considerable anger. The T&G NEC is dominated by people who are, if anything, slightly to the left of Todd. Nevertheless, the union has remained studiously silent on the question, and one NEC member summed up the chances of any official opposition to the war emerging with the words "no chance".

A similar situation exists at the RMT, where "left wing" rail section General Secretary Jimmy Knapp is staunchly pro-war and only three dissenting voices were raised in the union's boardroom. One RMT executive member (who belongs to the Labour Coordinating Committee) threatened that anyone who dared question the pro-war 'line' would "go the same way as Prescott".

The NCU's industrial sub-committee actually came out against the war, only to be overruled by General Secretary Tony Young. On the NUPE executive there were "only two or three" voices raised against the war.

All these, of course, are "left-wing" unions. The position of the AEU, GMB, UCW etc goes without saying — and in most cases without discussion.

But what of the minority of dissenting unions? The NUM, FBV, FTAT, the Bakers' Union, NATFHE and MSF have all come out with formal positions opposing war (usually by calling for sanctions and/or a ceasefire). Apart from NATFHE, none of these have organised any sort of campaign amongst their members. MSF, by far the largest of the anti-war unions, is presently in a state of paralysis due to internal manoeuvring (and a court action) surrounding the election for the post of General Secretary Designate.

NATFHE is a rather different kettle of fish: its rank and file Council has the power to overrule the Executive — which is exactly what happened over the war. As a result leading figures in the union are able to campaign against the war and speak at meetings in the name of the union.

Unfortunately, with the best will in the world, it has to be said that NATFHE is not exactly the most powerful or influential organisation within the trade union movement. So for the most part, anti-war activity in the unions is down to rank and file activists, trades councils and a minority of executive members with the guts to stand up and be counted. This week's lobby of the TUC, called by the NUJ Book Branch, showed the potential that exists for a broad-based anti-war campaign within the unions. And there are significant anti-war groups amongst media workers, health workers, Telecom workers, civil servants and teachers.

We're a minority, of course. But we've put up a good fight against General Secretaries for War. And in the unions this war will go on.



By Sleeper



Demonstration in Madrid, January 23

Learn from the Spanish movement

By Graham Woods

The Gulf war has provoked a powerful yet also very diverse peace movement in Spain.

This diversity, in terms of the aims and methods of the various groups involved, is largely due to

The difference between the Spanish anti-war movement and the British is that in Spain the main organisation of the labour movement are against the war, and central to organising

Spain's low profile involvement in the conflict.

The government position, according to a resolution passed by Congress on January 18th, is that Spain will only back the UN blockade and not the armed conflict. Consequently, Spain's contribution to the UN effort consists of three ships to uphold the trade embargo and no

opposition to it. Whereas in Britain the TUC and Labour Party are backing the slaughter.

Madelaine Davidson, NUJ Book Branch, Trade Unionists Against the War

Israeli socialist on tour

Adam Keller, the Israeli peace activist, editor of *The Other Israel* and regular contributor to *Socialist Organiser* is visiting Britain. He will be speaking about the effects of Iraqi missile attacks, the curfew in the Occupied Territories and the prospects for peace — both in the Gulf and between Israel and the Palestinians.

His meetings are:
 • Sunday 10 March: 7.30, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road, London (Finsbury Park Tube).
 • Monday 11 March: 1.00, Sheffield

University Students Union.
 5.00, Bradford University Students Union.
 7.30, Leeds Civil Hall.
 • Tuesday 12 March: 1.00, Manchester University Students Union.
 5.00, Lancaster University Students Union
 8.00, Wallasey Labour Party meeting at Edgerton Hall, Liscard, Wallasey.
 • Wednesday 13 March: 1.00, Oxford Poly Students Union.
 7.30, Nottingham Campaign Against War in the Gulf public meeting.

Adam Keller will also be speaking at the Labour Against the War rally, Westminster Central Hall on Thursday 14 March.
 For more details of Keller's tour, phone Mark Osborn on 071 639 7967.

ground or air troops.

The only opposition to the government resolution came from the United Left party, Izquierda Unida (IU) who called for the immediate withdrawal of the Spanish ships and an international peace conference.

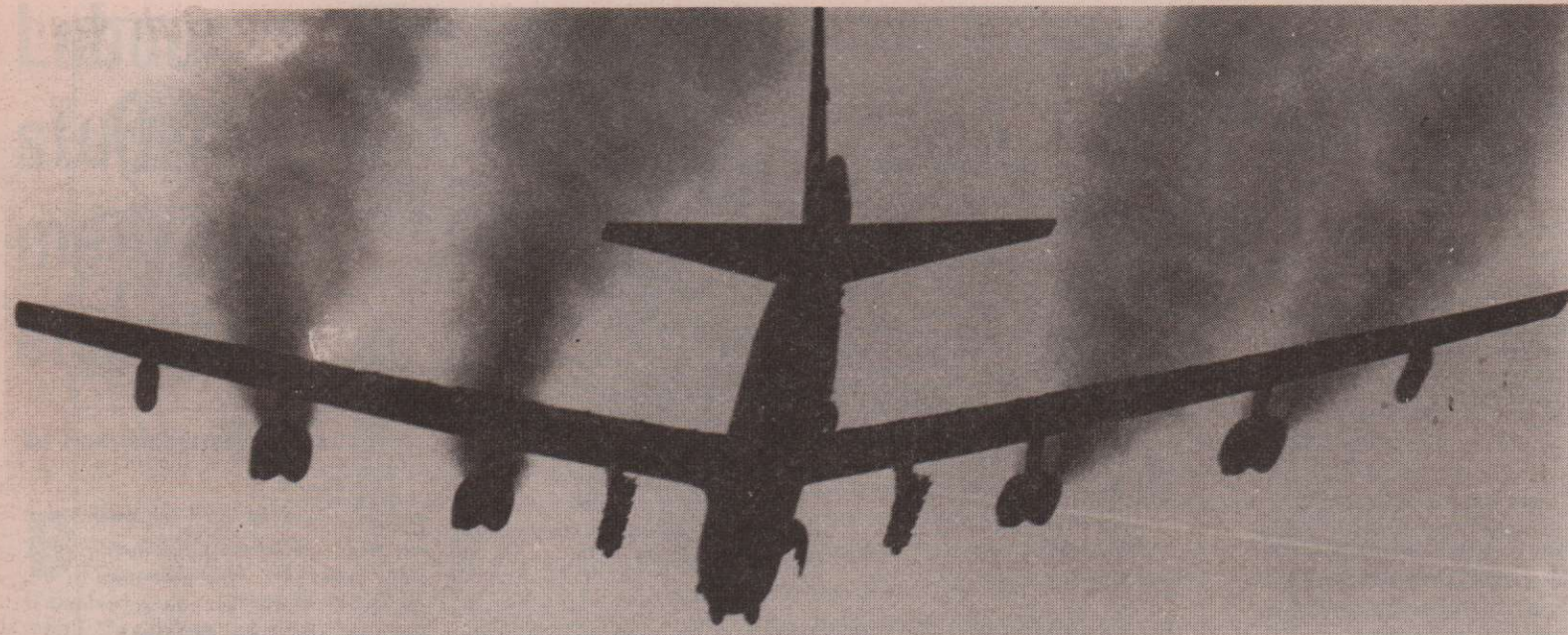
Since then IU has been at the forefront of an official opposition to the war and organised many demonstrations, the largest of which was in Madrid on January 20th, and attended by 100,000 people.

Meanwhile the war and the publicity around the peace campaign has triggered a strong wave of anti-imperialist and anti-militarist feeling throughout the country.

The campaign against NATO, headed by the Communist Union of Spain (UCE) has drawn great strength from the conflict, above all due to the use of American bases in Moron and Terrejon for air strikes against Baghdad.

Strong opposition has also come from the students who called a general strike backed by the main trade unions on January 23rd, and are threatening further action. The main effect of the war on young people has been a marked increase in conscientious objection to military service.

An indication of the strength of the peace movement in Spain was given when a government spokeswoman recently commented on the government's concern that the campaign was damaging Spain's reputation within NATO and the UN.



A US B52 taking off from RAF Fairford for a carpet bombing mission. The horrors of this war are very close to home. Photo: John Harris

US shows its real war aims

Stop the conquest!

By Martin Thomas

As we go to press, US-led forces have taken Kuwait City and the Iraqi army is pulling out from Kuwait as fast as it can.

George Bush declares: "The coalition will continue to prosecute the war with undiminished intensity... Saddam is trying to save the remnants of power, and in this too he will fail."

"Iraq's people will not regret the end of Saddam Hussein's vicious rule. They will rightly resent and detest the way the end comes about."

The US is planning to set up military administration across southern Iraq. Officially, this is only for a few weeks or months.

The implications go much further.

What Iraqi government will this military administration hand over to? Certainly

not to Saddam Hussein or to any Iraqi nationalist regime. The US scarcely bothers now to hide or blur over the fact that its primary aim is not anything to do with Kuwait, but *the crushing of Iraq*.

They want a pliant regime in Baghdad. But, even supposing they can find Iraqi quislings to head that regime, how will those quislings sustain their power amidst the great bitterness and resentment which the people of Iraq will feel against the US and all its allies?

Iraq's people will not regret the end of Saddam Hussein's vicious rule. They will rightly resent and detest the way the end comes about: not the overthrow of the dictator by the people whom he has oppressed, but the conquest of their country by the same imperialist powers who for years armed and sustained that dictator.

They will feel anger and sorrow for decades or generations to come about the tens of thousands killed and maimed in this US conquest of their country.

The US conquest points towards either continued US military control of the whole

of Iraq, to prop up a puppet government in Baghdad, or the chopping up of the country into pieces, with parts of

territory being annexed by neighbouring countries.

Amidst the war victory cries, the anti-war movement

must keep its voice loud. Stop the slaughter! Stop the imperialist conquest of Iraq! Troops out of the Gulf!

Falklands veteran speaks out

By John Merrett

I joined the Marines at the end of 1980. After six months training I went to Northern Ireland for six months. That was an eye-opening experience.

Four months after Ireland we went to the Falklands. I was 22 years old. I joined to get a job and find a bit of independence.

There were peace proposals that were being discussed while we sailed down towards the Falklands. We did not believe that it would come to war. Then the Belgrano was sunk. We were told it was heading for the Falklands (in fact it was heading south).

We were fed a lot of propaganda. There was a lot of discussion about the average age of death among American troops in Vietnam being 19. We did not believe it. Then we took the average age of our group — and found it was 20.

We spent a lot of time just waiting for something to happen. We were the 'yompers', who went across the Island. There were two incidents where we came into direct conflict with the Argentinians. Fortunately we had a more sane officer who tried not to get us killed — for which, on one occasion he was reprimanded. Later he was wounded with shrapnel; the man next to him was killed.

There came to be a realisation that the people who died were not the people who had organised the war.

I have always been a socialist and opposed the war. But in the situation you are carried along by events. I did shoot at Argentinians —

it would have been very hard not to.

I had not joined up to kill people — in fact, very few people do. No-one expects there to be a war. The army adverts just show an exciting life.

Remember that in a war people become petrified. People literally do crap themselves. When I got back I hit the floor when planes went overhead and covered my head when I heard lightning. This is a general experience.

We took part in a training exercise where the enemy was a radical terrorist CND group. As we attacked I could not shoot. But I was shocked at the reaction of some of the people who had been down to the Falklands — this was no longer a game. If they had live rounds and had been told to shoot their friends they looked as if they would do it.

I decided that I could not stay in the services any longer. I discussed becoming a conscientious objector. The officers and NCOs told me I would get a hard time. There



"Army is not what it's cracked up to be"

Czechs protest against the war

Slavyna Novakova reports on protests in Prague against the Gulf war, where Czechoslovakia has a small contingent in the US-led coalition.

For the fourth week running, on 18 February there was a rally against the Gulf war in the Old City square in Prague.

More than 350 people marched to the Federal Assembly. It was the biggest demonstration of the month in which the anti-war movement has existed.

Prague people of all ages were there, and numerous women, who generally keep well out of political life. The demonstrators were mostly Czechs, whereas previously the anti-war movement had been dominated by Anglo-Saxons living temporarily in Prague and by Arab students.

The demonstrations have been called by the Campaign for the Defence of Youth Rights and the Association for Middle East Dialogue. The latter association was set up on 14 January from a public conference called by the members of the foreign left press, in which numerous Palestinian students and Iraqi political oppositionists took part.

Although they have demonstrated twice at the Federal Assembly, the protesters have not yet gained any support from members of Parliament, not even from those linked to the left of Civic Forum.

The slogans on the demonstrations were "We want peace", "Bring the Czechs home", "Army go home", "No blood for oil", "No war for profits", and "We don't want dollars stained with blood". These slogans do not yet get a big response among Czechs, who gave 70% support to the government's decision to send a contingent to join the allied forces and "protect civilian populations".

Black activists arrested for opposing the war

By Jenni Bailey

Eleven black anti-Gulf war protestors were arrested on Wednesday 20 February during a picket called by Black People Against the War in the Gulf to oppose racist attacks and deportations.

The picket, outside the Home Office, was broken up by police after the Chief Police Officer said we could not chant "US murderers" — which he believed would cause offence to passing Americans.

The road was blocked by four police vans as the cops picked out "ring-leaders" and then attacked the crowd at random. Leading black activists from the Newham

Monitoring Group and the Convenor of the National Union of Students (London Area) were arrested.

Charges were made under Section 4 of the Public Order Act, which could lead to six months in prison.

The police broke up our peaceful picket because they did not agree with what we were chanting. We should not accept their right to determine what we can and cannot say.

The government are attacking Arab people as supporters of Saddam and "sending them back". There is increased racism on the streets, and the government's thugish friends — the police — are arresting black anti-war activists.

Black people — get involved in Black People Against War in the Gulf, PO Box 273, London E7.

Cholera could follow blitzkrieg

Iraqi children and babies are being killed by George Bush's continued air assault on Iraq's cities.

A team from the official World Health Organisation has reported that diarrhoeal diseases among children — caused by lack of clean water, and possibly fatal — have increased fourfold.

With warmer weather coming, says team leader Dr Ali Khogali, there is serious risk of an epidemic of cholera and typhoid.

Feeding the guns, or the 800 million?

GRAFFITI

Back in January, the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, anxiously assured the American people that the Gulf war was costing "clearly less than \$1 billion a day."

White House Budget Director Richard Darman has now published the estimate that the war costs the US \$1.7 billion daily.

At that rate the US war machine is spending every two days almost as much as the total yearly income of the poorer 50-odd per cent of the people of Bangladesh - some 50-odd million people.

Put it another way: if the US's extra military spending due to the war went instead to the 800 million or so people in the world who live in or near starvation, it would give each of them \$2 a day, and enable each of them to get adequate food.

tion been allowed to play a big role in the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf and the Committee's drive to exclude left-wing groups which are mobilising against the war?

Linking theory and practice, Hobsbawm-style. Eric Hobsbawm's daughter Julia, according to the *Observer* of 24 February, has been drawing some practical conclusions from her father's recent writings about "the forward march of labour" being halted, and workers' struggle declining.

She is the organiser of a new group called the One Thousand Club, open to people who give £1000 or more to the Labour Party.

It was launched on 25 February with a dinner at a posh restaurant. Members get special briefings with Shadow Cabinet people. Perhaps if they pay enough they'll even be told how Labour's policy on the Gulf was worked out.



Denis Healey - as left as they get in *Marxism Today*

"Scores of racist attacks and incidents of harassment have been reported in Dearborn, a Detroit suburb where America's largest Arab community of 250,000 live.

"In Toledo, Ohio, a Palestinian was beaten up. Detroit resident Robert Haddoni escaped with his life when his home was attacked by a petrol bomb. In Boston, at least one Syrian shopkeeper was forced to sell his business after a campaign of death-threat phone calls.

"People are harassed in shops and on the streets of the US just because they are overheard speaking in Arabic.

"Ironically, Saudis and Kuwaitis are suffering as much abuse as anyone else regarded as 'Arab'."

From the new edition of the anti-racist journal *CARF*. Subscriptions to *CARF* are £5 for a year, from *CARF*, BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX.

Marxism Today, the no-longer-Marxist journal of the no-longer Communist Party, got itself some publicity last weekend for its interview with Denis Healey in which he condemns the Gulf War.

Fair enough: but the veteran right-winger, Cold-Warrior, and nuclear-armed Denis Healey seems to be about the most left-wing contributor to this supposedly left-wing journal.

The lead article, by veteran CP'er Eric Hobsbawm, accepts the war as "not pointless" and "in practice probably necessary", though it deplors the "crazy" and "incompetent" way in which the US is conducting it.

One other article, by a professor at Oxford University, opposes the war (quite lucidly); the rest of the coverage is weary above-it-all comment.

All in all, not a journal likely to move many people on the streets against the war. So why has the *Marxism Today* fac-

Student protest in the US is mobilising twice as many students as in the 1960s, according to a survey reported in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*

39 per cent of first year students told pollsters that they had been involved in protest during their last year at high school. In the 1960s the figure was only 15 per cent or so.

The top issue for today's students was the environment, rather than the more high-temperature questions of war and racism which dominated the '60s.



Editors for war



By Jim Denham

Saddam Hussein's bell-sigerent speech of last Thursday received a very enthusiastic press here in Britain.

The tabloids, especially, could scarcely contain their glee and words like "Suicide" and "Death Wish" dominated Friday's headlines. As usual, the likes of the *Sun*'s Kelvin McKenzie and the *Star*'s Brian Hitchen (aka "Editors for War") were taking their cue from the Pentagon, which had described the speech as "a suicide note for the Iraqi ar-

my". As the *Mirror* noted, "Saddam totally let President Bush off the hook. Accepting the Gorbachev peace plan would have been a nightmare for Bush". Only the *Telegraph*'s Washington correspondent, in an impressive display of prescience, reported that "there was concern [in Washington] that Mr Tariq Aziz, Iraqi foreign minister, still planned to convey a somewhat different message when he met Mr Gorbachev."

Which was, of course, exactly what happened.

Bush's determination to scupper the peace plan brought forth another near-unanimous crop of tabloid headlines on Saturday: "High Noon". It was left to the *Independent*'s Washington correspondent, Sarah Helm, to spell out what was really going on: "It [the US ultimatum] showed the Bush Administration is prepared to face the massive casualties of a ground war and called into question

whether President Bush ever seriously contemplated achieving a peaceful solution that would allow President Saddam to withdraw and remain in power."

The *Observer* and *Independent on Sunday* both carried detailed (and convincing) accounts of the heroic efforts of George Bush and General Powell to ensure that peace didn't break out. Both papers also pinpointed the main objective now being fought for: "Victory was not enough: Saddam had to grovel" (*Observer*); "Humiliation is the name of this grisly game" (*IoS*).

Noting this did not prevent the *Observer* from giving continued backing to the war (albeit hedged about with the usual pompous "liberal" provisos) but it did produce a remarkable change of line by the *IoS*: "There is much to lose by pressing on. We have been right to fight...But we should recognise that we have already won." Barring a possible change of heart at the *Guardian*, that's the

nearest we're going to get to editorial "dissent" from any national paper.

Under the cover of the Gulf war and by means of non-attributable briefings to selected journalists, the government has now admitted that the poll tax is irrefragable and a massive U-turn is about to be carried out.

Robert Harris, of the *Sunday Times*, penned the following memorable commentary: "Has there ever, in recent political history, been a greater act of folly than the poll tax? What a botch-up. What a bloomer. What a gaffe, bungle, boob, goof, fluff, fiasco, boner, changer, howler and flop. What a fatheaded, bone-headed, pin-headed, blockheaded, blunderheaded, muttonheaded, knuckleheaded, chuckleheaded, puddingheaded, jobber-nowed wash-out of a cock-up."

After you with the Thesaurus, Mr Harris.

The Women's Eye guide to buying something you don't understand (and which costs a lot)



By Liz Millward

When we are little our parents buy things for us, from meat to motor cars. When we are grown up it falls to us to buy things. Even, or especially, if we are dole-struck, buying things is skilled work.

The man or woman behind

the counter has something we want/need and knowledge. The problem is lack of information - they have it, we don't. They are often unwilling to share.

19 magazine gives advice on how to buy a car: get your Dad, brother, or boyfriend to go with you, ie. admit you are a helpless female and push responsibility and control on to the nearest man.

What follows is an alternative guide:

(1) Consider what you want the item to do. Is it to be a status symbol? Practical? Long lasting? Cheap? Fashionable? Silly? Easy to buy? The answers to this question will give you clues as to where and what to buy. If you want a hairdryer for the dog's fur, you won't need the salon attachments.

(2) Ruthlessly exploit your friends for information. Do they have a power drill? How much did it cost? Where from? Is it any good?

(3) Once your friends are exhausted, exploit the experts. Ring up the biggest accommodation agencies, get them to give you a guide to prices, then find your own flat through the paper. Ditto cars, washing machines, reconditioned vacuum machines.

(4) If the first experts are unhelpful try specialist women's agencies, they are always pleasanter to deal with. Contact Women in Manual Trades and, in London, *City Limits* and *Time Out*.

(5) Information is also available free in newsagents and libraries.

(6) There is no shortage of things to buy. You cannot "miss" a bargain by not buying quickly. There will always be another sale.

(7) Cash can only be spent once. Cheques and credit cards give the impression of having both goods and money.

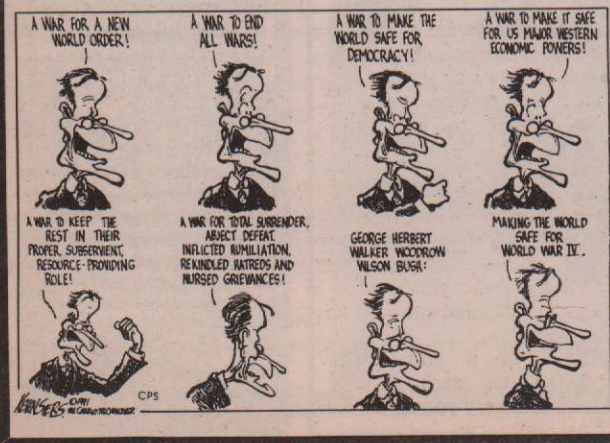
(8) If you cannot pay for the goods without standing in 14 different 20-minute queues, leave. Ditto if they want to charge you £25 to deliver, or won't make a convenient appointment. You are entitled to your dignity.

This column may seem odd in a paper dedicated to replacing the consumer society. But I am sick of giving my money to corporations who treat me like dirt, don't train their staff and rip me off. I am also sick of buying in ignorance, deprived of the information which would allow me to make a proper choice about the things on offer.

My guide is a protest against the advertisers and the retailers who lie and cheat to get my money, then humiliate me by making me queue for hours to pay.

Follow my guide if you like. Write in with your own suggestions.

Better still, turf out the exploiters for good!



Labour students mess up elections

By Paul McGarry

Bad luck, so the saying goes, comes in threes. After hearing that Dalglish had resigned from the Liverpool hot seat, and my giro coming late, I was a worried man.

Fortunately the third piece of misfortune was visited upon a political adversary.

At two minutes past five on Friday 22nd, the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) leadership faction handed in their nominations for this spring's election for the executive of the National Union of Students.

The deadline was five o'clock.

Panic set in. It must be all a bad dream! It just can't be true! It is.

For the first time in living memory NOLS will be without a slate for NUS. A couple of sleepless nights later NOLS passed a vote of no confidence in its NUS committee.

The question being asked by Jo and Joanne Punter is "how could they be so incompetent?" The answer is quite simple. We just need to look at the evidence.

The present NOLS leadership has been unable to mount a single campaign in NUS, failed to win a place on NUS Steering Committee at Christmas NUS conference, lost virtually all its support in the Further Education sector, organised tiny irrelevant conferences and reached an all-time low by selecting Paul Hewitt to contest a National Executive election (or not as the case may be).

What a useless bunch! Oh yes, *Militant* were ruled out too. Now I wonder if Derek Hatton could fix it for them...



Books by Albania's hated dictator Enver Hoxha burn in the streets as Albania's people fight to get rid of Stalinism. New

independent trade unions have called strikes alongside student protests



Time for change

The twentieth Labour Students (NOLS) conference takes place in London this weekend (2-3 March).

The election and most of the policy debates are formalities. The Kinnockite grouping will maintain control. Under the control of the "New Direction" caucus, NOLS has drifted even further rightwards. NOLS needs a political and organisational shake-up.

On virtually every issue, NOLS has fallen in behind the Party leadership. Until recently they supported Kinnock's warmongering, now they favour the broad anti-war movement of sanctions and an immediate ceasefire.

It is important that the left redoubles its efforts to build

its support in NOLS if the present state of affairs is to be changed. Instead of acquiescing to John Smith's pro-market economics, and Tony Blair's anti-union industrial "strategy", students need to be won to real socialist ideas.

Organising Students for a Labour Victory (SLV) is a good way to win new people to NOLS and the Labour Party. Within the SLV framework the left should raise alternatives to the Party's present programme.

NOLS needs to be an outgoing, vibrant organisation, capable of mounting grass roots campaigning in NUS and linking up with the struggles of workers and the specially oppressed. Far too often they are cliques of student union executive members. Right now Labour

Clubs should be central to anti-war activity.

The present bureaucratic structures also prevent NOLS from being the campaigning organisation it could be. A new constitution enabling Labour Clubs to set up more easily and to allow part-time FE students to join is needed. And the power of the NOLS office in ruling out opposition delegates needs to be reduced.

NOLS is, however, the property of a single tight-knit

faction. This grossly undemocratic conception of a youth organisation (ironically practised by the *Militant* for 20 years in the LPYS) is unviable.

The coming months will be crucial for rebuilding the NOLS left and the present flippancy of much of the non-Kinnock NOLS activists needs to be challenged. The present limited revival of the left is working its way through Labour Clubs and needs to be organised.

Why did Dalglish go?

By Paul McGarry

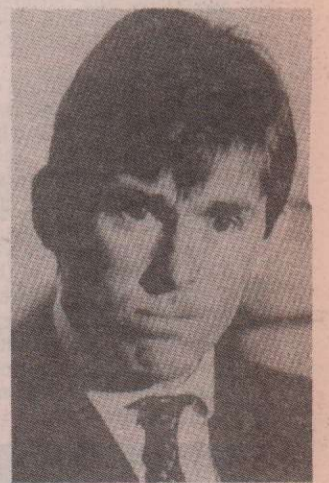
Kenny Dalglish, Britain's most successful football manager, resigned last week. Press reports say he intends to leave the game completely.

Dalglish, a millionaire, was unable to cope with the pressure of being at the helm of Britain's top club, Liverpool.

The press, quality and gutter alike, have spun theories. Was there a personal feud? Had Dalglish come to terms with not being a player? Did he want to spend more time with his family? Had he been unable to recover from the Heysel and Hillsborough tragedies?

I like Dalglish. His single syllable answers in post-match interviews were a welcome respite from the usual "boys done well", "it just came across and I hit it" drivel that is served up by the sheepskin jacket brigade. Along with Terry "El Tel" Venables, he was one of the few football personalities who seemed genuinely entranced by the game. That is why his resignation is so surprising.

But in a game where players can earn £5,000 a week and very young working class men can become rich



Kenny Dalglish

and famous in a few months, it is no wonder that even the most committed can be sapped of their energy. The non-stop press assault and the commercial pressure take their toll.

In Europe and Latin America, the odds are even higher. John Toshack, tipped to replace Dalglish, was sacked by Real Madrid before Christmas, with the Italian team lying fourth from top of the first division!

Fortunately we haven't reached that level of absurdity in Britain.

I will miss Dalglish, and I think football will. I just hope his departure doesn't let Arsenal win the League championship.

"New realism" bust in Australia

From Tony Brown in Sydney

Australian Labor's experiment with "new realism" has proved to be a complete disaster with the news this week that South Australia's State Bank (SASB) has \$2.5 billion of unrecoverable debts.

As a result the S.A. Labor government has announced a Royal Commission into the losses. It is the third Royal Commission (all running concurrently) into the failure of State Banks and/or merchant banks operated by Labor Governments.

The SASB's failure follows closely the collapse of the State Banks, and their subsidiary merchant banks, in Labor-governed Western Australia and Victoria.

The political cost so far has been the forced resignation of two WA Premiers and the

Deputy Premier, and the Victorian Premier and Treasurer.

Can the banks' failures be

New Zealand — one of the world's first welfare states — is reaping the fruits of a spell of "Labour Thatcherism". David Lange's Labour government pioneered a free-market assault. Unemployment rose, wages slumped. Last year's general election voted Labour out and the National (Tory) party in. Now the new National government is axing welfare across the board. New Zealand's free health service will go; and one school in Wellington is already reduced to feeding its children on stale bread bought cheap from bakers.

blamed on the governments? Yes. And the electorates are waiting for their opportunity to exact their toll. After Hawke's election win in March 1983, Labor proudly heralded the virtues of the free market, level playing

fields, ending restrictive practices. They were determined to ditch the commitment to state-owned industries and institutions and to deregulate the financial and banking system.

Labor enjoyed its greatest ever level of popular support in Australia's history during the 1980s. The ALP has governed nationally and in every state but one since 1983.

With deregulation and the introduction of foreign banks, credit was easily available. Previous lending restrictions were relaxed or even removed and speculation was rife. Keating's high interest rate policy put the stop on the credit binge and left the banks exposed to a collapsed economy.

The normally conservative, and relatively small, state banks hired "whiz-kid" managers paying them vastly inflated salaries who then promptly lost billions of dollars. And all the time they were backed and then pro-

tected by the new style, modern Labor Premiers.

Those who are now paying the cost are the hundreds of thousands of small depositors who stand to lose life savings, investments, and retirement funds.

The losses in Victoria have been so great that the next election will see Labor decimated. It will take years just to rebuild. It will be similar in Western Australia and it's too early yet to assess how deep the damage will be in Australia. All the signs are that Hawke is headed for the same fate although he still has until 1993.

Backed by their PR and advertising men, Labor has been more determined to present images than pro-working class policies throughout the 1980s. By abandoning their traditional supporters Labor is delivering them to a newly emergent and more ideologically committed coalition. And that is the price of "new realism" in Australia.

Socialism o

In this excerpt from her speech on the "Spartacus Programme" of 1918, the Polish-German Marxist leader Rosa Luxemburg argued for socialism and revolution as the only alternative to capitalism and the barbarity of war. Luxemburg was murdered alongside her comrade Karl Liebknecht by right wing troops under the direction of a Social-Democratic government in January 1919

The class rule of the bourgeoisie is the real criminal responsible for the World War, in Germany as in France, in Russia as in England, in Europe as in America.

The capitalists of all nations are the real instigators of the mass murder. International capital is the insatiable god Baal, into whose bloody maw millions upon millions of steaming human sacrifices are thrown.

The World War confronts society with the choice: either continuation of capitalism, new wars, and imminent decline into chaos and anarchy, or abolition of capitalist exploitation.

With the conclusion of world war, the class rule of the bourgeoisie has forfeited its right to existence. It is no longer capable of leading society out of the terrible economic collapse which the imperialist orgy has left in its wake.

Out of all this bloody confusion, this yawning abyss, there is no help, no escape, no rescue other than socialism!

Only the revolution of the world proletariat can bring order into this chaos can bring work and bread for all, can end the reciprocal slaughter of the peoples, can restore peace, freedom, true culture to this martyred humanity.

Down with the wage system! That is the slogan of the hour.

Instead of wage labour and class rule there must be collective labour. The means of production must cease to be the monopoly of a single class; they must become the common property of all.



Red Rosa now has vanished too
Where she lives is hid from view
She told the poor what life is about
And so the rich have rubbed her out

Bertoldt Brecht, 1919



The Eastern Front 1944



As not seen on TV: Iraqi child victim of US bombers



Vietnamese children flee napalm attack. They had when the US bombs struck. Napalm is being used

No more exploiters and exploited!

Planned production and distribution of the product in the common interest.

Abolition not only of the contemporary mode of production, mere exploitation and robbery, but equally of contemporary commerce, mere fraud

In place of the employers and their wage slaves, free working comrades! Labour as nobody's torture, because everybody's duty!

A human and honourable life for all who do their social duty. Hunger no longer the curse of labour, but the scourge of idleness!

Only in such a society are national hatred and servitude uprooted. Only when such a society has become a reality will the earth no more be stained by murder. Only then can it be said: this war was the last.

In this hour, socialism is the only salvation for humanity. The words of the *Communist Manifesto* flare above the crumbling bastions of capitalism society:

Socialism or barbarism!

The establishment of the socialist order of society is the mightiest task which has ever fallen to a class and to a revolution

in the history of the world. This task requires a complete transformation of the state and a complete overthrow of the economic and social foundations of society.

This transformation and this

"Only the revolution of the world proletariat can bring order into this chaos, can bring work and bread for all, can end the reciprocal slaughter of the peoples, can restore peace, freedom, true culture to this martyred humanity."

overthrow cannot be decreed by any bureau, committee or parliament. It can be begun and carried out only by the masses of people themselves.

In all previous revolutions a small minority of the people led the revolutionary struggle, gave it aim

and direction, and used the mass only as an instrument to carry its interests, the interests of the minority, through to victory. The socialist revolution is the first which is in the interests of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by the great majority of the working people themselves.

The mass of the proletariat must do more than stake out clearly the aims and direction of the revolution. It must also personally, by its own activity, bring socialism step by step into life.

The essence of socialist society consists in the fact that the great labouring mass ceases to be a dominated mass, but rather, makes the entire political and economic life its own life and gives that life a conscious, free, and autonomous direction.

From the uppermost summit of the state down to the tiniest parish, the proletarian mass must therefore replace the inherited organs of bourgeois class rule — the assemblies, parliaments and city councils — with its own class slogans — with workers' and soldiers' councils.

It must occupy all the posts, supervise all functions, measure all official needs by the standard of its

own class interests and the tasks of socialism. Only through constant, vital, reciprocal contact between the masses of the people and their organs, the workers' and soldiers' councils can the activity of the people fill the state with a socialist spirit.

The economic overturn, likewise can be accomplished only if the process is carried out by proletarian mass action. The naked decrees of socialisation by the highest revolutionary authorities are by themselves empty phrases.

Only the working class, through its own activity, can make the word flesh. The workers can achieve control over production, and ultimately real power by means of tenacious struggle with capital, hand-to-hand in every factory, with direct mass pressure, with strikes and with the creation of its own permanent representative organs.

From dead machines assigned their place in production by capital the proletarian masses must learn to transform themselves into the free and independent directors of this process. They have to acquire the feeling of responsibility proper to active members of the collectivity which alone possesses ownership of all wealth.

ght capitalism!

r barbarism!



Children playing in their village today in the Gulf

They have to develop industriousness without the capitalist whip, the highest productivity

"It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would good humouredly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or of a national assembly, that they would calmly renounce property, profit, the right to exploit. [They] will turn the country into a smoking heap of rubble rather than voluntarily give up wage slavery."

without slavedrivers, discipline without the yoke, order without authority.

The highest idealism in the interest of the collectivity, the strictest self-discipline, the truest public spirit of the masses are the moral foundations of socialist society, just as stupidity, egotism, and corruption are the moral foundations of capitalist society.

All these socialist civic virtues, together with the knowledge and skills necessary to direct socialist enterprises, can be won by the mass of workers only through their own activity, their own experience.

The socialisation of society can be achieved only through tenacious, tireless struggle by the working mass along its entire front, on all points where labour and capital, people and bourgeois class rule, can see the whites of one another's eyes. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.

During the bourgeois revolutions, bloodshed, terror, and political murder were an indispensable weapon in the hand of the rising classes.

The proletarian revolution requires no terror for its aims; it hates and despises killing. It does not need these weapons because it does not combat individuals but institutions, because it does not enter the

arena with naive illusions whose disappointment it would seek to revenge.

It is not the desperate attempt of a minority to mould the world forcibly according to its ideal, but the action of the great massive millions of the people, destined to fulfill a historic mission and to transform historical necessity into reality.

But the proletarian revolution is at the same time the death knell for all servitude and oppression. That is why all capitalists, Junkers [landlords], petty bourgeois, officers, all opportunists and parasites of exploitation and class rule rise up to a man to wage mortal combat against the proletarian revolution.

It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would good-humouredly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or of a national assembly, that they would calmly renounce property, profit, the right to exploit.

All ruling classes fought to the end, with tenacious energy, to preserve their privileges. The Roman patricians and the medieval feudal barons alike, the English cavaliers and the American slavedealers, the Wallachian boyars and the Lyonnais silk manufacturers — they all shed streams of blood, they all marched over corp-

ses, murder, and arson, instigated civil war and treason, in order to defend their privileges and their power.

"In place of the employers and their wage slaves, free labour for working comrades! Labour as nobody's torture because everybody's duty!"

"The essence of socialist society consists in the fact that the great labouring mass ceases to be a dominated mass."

The imperialist capitalist class, as last offspring of the caste of exploiters, outdoes all its predecessors in brutality, in open cynicism, and treachery. It defends its holiest of holies, its profit and its privilege of exploitation, with tooth and nail,

with the methods of cold evil which it demonstrated to the world in the entire history of colonial politics and in the recent World War.

It will mobilise heaven and hell against the proletariat. It will mobilise the peasants against the cities, the backward strata of the working class against the socialist vanguard; it will use officers to instigate atrocities; it will try to paralyse every socialist measure with a thousand methods of passive resistance. It will turn the country into a smoking heap of rubble rather than voluntarily give up wage slavery.

All this resistance must be broken step by step, with an iron fist and ruthless energy. The violence of the bourgeois counter-revolution must be confronted with the revolutionary violence of the proletariat.

Against the attacks, insinuations and rumours of the bourgeoisie must stand the inflexible clarity of purpose, vigilance, and ever-ready activity of the proletarian mass.

Against the threatened dangers of the counter-revolution, the arming of the people and disarming of the ruling classes.

Against the parliamentary obstructionist manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie, the active organisation of the mass of workers and soldiers.

Against the omnipresence, the thousand means of power of bourgeois society, the concentrated, compact, and fully developed power of the working class.

The fight for socialism is the mightiest civil war in world history, and the proletarian revolution must procure the necessary tools for this civil war; it must learn to use them — to struggle and to win.

Such arming of the solid mass of labouring people with all political power for the tasks of the revolution — that is the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore the true democracy!

Not where the wage slave sits next to the capitalist, the rural proletariat next to the Junker in fraudulent equality to engage in parliamentary debate over questions of life and death, but where the million-headed proletarian mass seizes the entire power of the state in its calloused fist, like the god Thor his hammer, using it to smash the head of the ruling classes — that alone is democracy, that alone is not a betrayal of the people.

A new pamphlet from Socialist Organiser



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

Israeli socialists speak out against the Gulf war

The issues in this war

The Matzpen group (Revolutionary Communist League) in Israel — the only organised Trotskyist group in the Middle East — spells out the arguments against the blitzkrieg on Iraq

With the eruption of the war in the Gulf, and following the heavy bombing of Iraq by the United States and her allies in the region, the Israeli government and the leadership of the Zionist left in Israel hurried to back the warlike designs of these powers.

This situation has been aggravated since the start of the missile attacks on Israeli population centres. Confronted with real fear the majority of the activists of the left lined up unanimously behind the plan seeking the elimination of Saddam Hussein and his regime.

All of a sudden, all the arguments for the need to prevent this war are forgotten. Moreover, the fact that the Palestinian national movement has been standing beside Iraq has provided a legitimisation for withdrawal from the struggle against occupation, in something like a collective "punishment" of the Palestinian people.

Fear on the one hand, and political blindness on the other, have raised many questions linked with this war. We decided here to answer some of them in order to strengthen the activists of the Israeli protest movement.

What is the character of the Iraqi regime, and why has it occupied Kuwait?

The regime of the Iraqi Ba'ath, headed by Saddam Hussein, is a regime based on state terror, which systematically and brutally suppresses all its opponents: the Kurdish national movement, the parties of the left, labour unions, and others. The regime's power derives from its ability to distribute the social wealth among three strata of the ruling class: the industrial bourgeoisie and the big landowners, the state and political bureaucracy (the Ba'ath system), and the military system. Although Saddam Hussein's regime has improved the Iraqi masses' standard of living, especially after the oil crisis of the '70s, this improvement was conditioned upon the elimination of basic civil and democratic rights.

The outbreak of the Iranian revolution set a significant turning point for this regime. The imperialist states, ie. the USA and Western Europe, saw in Iraq the only local factor able to stop the influence of the Shi'ite revolution on the region. Thus Iraq received enormous financial support from her regional allies at that time (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, and the Gulf Emirates) as well as from the Western powers (especially France, Germany, and Great Britain), in

order to equip herself with the most modern instruments of warfare and to open war against the Iran of Khomeini.

The Western powers and their allies calculated that it was worthwhile to turn Iraq into a regional military power, in spite of the fact that this would upset the balance of military power in the area; they saw themselves confronted with the dangers caused by the message of the Iranian Shi'ite movement, a message which, at least in the initial phase, was anti-imperialist and directed against all "infidel": Zionists, the corrupt rulers in the Gulf, and others.

Saddam Hussein's regime, also fearing the influence of the fundamentalist movement upon the Shi'ite population of Iraq, fulfilled the allies' expectations and started a blood-soaked war against Iran, a war which cost the lives of about one million, and ended only because of Iraq's inability to defeat Iran militarily.

At the end of the war (1988), Iraq was left with huge foreign debts to its various providers of weapons and finances, with a devastated economy, and with almost one million soldiers recruited to a military system, which — according to Western analysts — is one of the biggest and most modern in the world. (Here we have to point out that, until the occupation of Kuwait, Iraq continued to receive military aid, especially from the United States.)

In this situation of no-victory and no-defeat, and with Iraq having fulfilled her role in the war against Iran, her creditors felt that the time had come to demand the return of debts. Whenever a mercenary finishes a job, they turn their back on him and demand the full price for the military adventure.

The dynamics governing regimes of the Iraqi type forces it to maintain and justify its military system, although its role — to block the Iranian threat — already ceased to be practical, and this for the following reasons: the army is the regime's basic pillar; mass recruitment serves to cut down unemployment and provides the recruits' families with a regular income; keeping up a huge military system justifies the continuation of the emergency regime and the suppression of democratic rights caused by it.

In such a situation, the occupation of Kuwait was regarded an aim easy to achieve, legitimising and consolidating the dictatorial Iraqi regime, while at the same time eliminating one of its main creditors. Beyond the historical explanations, according to which the Iraqi Ba'ath regards Kuwait as a province extracted from Iraq by British imperialism (1922) in an artificial way, the act of occupation was not performed in order to distribute the wealth owned by a few corrupt sheikhs among the Iraqi masses, neither has it come to "correct" the distortions introduced by imperialism at the beginning of the century. By occupying Kuwait, the Iraqi regime hoped to find a solution to three problems: the cancellation of her debts to Kuwait and to use the Kuwaiti oil to cover her budgetary deficit, to pressure for a raise of oil prices in the international market, and to justify the

maintenance of the huge Iraqi military system.

Is the occupation of Kuwait a legitimate act or a violation of the Kuwaiti people's right for self-determination?

British imperialism, striving to maintain its economic and political control over our region invented — in the concrete sense of the word — various states and nations: Kuwait, the Gulf Emirates, Jordan, and others. This was done by enthroning local effendis, and by controlling natural resources and relations of political power in the region. Also the establishment of the state of Israel has its origin in the imperialists' desire to consolidate their policy of "divide and rule" in the area.

"From all this we have to conclude that the examination of the question of the occupation of Kuwait on the basis of the Kuwaiti people's right for self-determination is an interesting theoretical question, but irrelevant for the understanding of the present war."

Historically, Kuwait belonged to Iraq. Her separation aimed first of all to facilitate control over this area rich in oil; the quantity of oil produced there surmounts the quantity produced in all of the present Iraqi territory. Ever since Iraqi independence there has not been one government which agreed to the artificial separation of Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti ruling class is and was the local representative of the multinational monopolies controlling extraction, refinement and marketing of the oil. The fact that the greater portion of Kuwaiti capital was invested outside the state borders, and outside the region, especially in the United States and Europe (in the form of investment in international companies and trusts, and petrodollars invested in Western banks) gives ample evidence of the parasitic character of this corrupt ruling class. The fact that, in spite of the expulsion of the ruling families from Kuwaiti territory, the state's capital has remained in their private accounts abroad is the best proof of the character of this state's ruling class and of its type of "patriotism". Here we have to add also that around 60% of the workforce in Kuwait is not of Kuwaiti origin, but composed of Palestinians, workers from East Asia, Pakistan, and India. The total Kuwaiti population amounts to about 700,000.

It is difficult to speak of self-determination in the case of a people who live in a state which was invented artificially, and whose rulers make use of the natural resources in order to pile up private capital. Viewed from this angle, there is much justice to the Iraqi demand for the annexation of Kuwait.

However, as already explained above, Saddam Hussein's regime did not occupy Kuwait for the sake of the well-being of the Iraqi masses, and even less so for the sake of Arab unity.

From all this we have to conclude that the examination of the question of the occupation of Kuwait on the basis of the Kuwaiti people's right for self-determination is in fact an interesting theoretical question, but irrelevant for the understanding of the present

war. Our opposition to the occupation of Kuwait is based on the principle that any step forward by the masses themselves, on the basis of democratic principles. Saddam Hussein's regime is far from representing the interests of the masses of his people, and even farther from representing the principles of democracy...

So why, if in fact, did the United States and her allies start this war?

The question of Kuwaiti self-determination has been the fig-leaf used to cover up the real needs and aims of the West and its regional partners. It was not concern for the Kuwaiti people which led the United States to recruit all its military power against Iraq, but her and her allies' economic, military and political interests:

- The need to control the world's energy resources is not the private interest of the few international companies which market the black gold. We are dealing here with the energy source which runs capitalist industry all over the world. Given the absence of cheaper alternative sources of energy, control of the oil is equivalent to control over the wheels of world economy. Seen in this context, the Western states, ie. the biggest consumers of the black liquid extracted from our region, have to do everything in their power in order to guarantee that the oil will arrive to the world's economic centres, regularly and for the lowest possible price. (We include here Japan among the Western states not because of her geographic location, but because of her being a capitalist state which shares the world's social wealth with West Europe and the USA.)

- The imperialist character of the Western states does not derive from their physical role in the countries of the "Third World" nor, as in our case, in the Arab countries, but from their ability to decide what type of government is set up in these countries, and to control the capital accumulated from the local natural resources.

- Imperialism rules by supporting dictatorial regimes that represent the interests of a small minority of the population and strive to remain in power to continue to accumulate capital. Undermining these regimes is equivalent to the undermining of the imperialist states' ability to keep control over the oil. Moreover, the Arab states' capital originating from oil — and to a major part from the sale of oil to the Western countries — is not reinvested locally, but in the imperialist countries, because the Western economic centres provide better opportunities to save and increase capital. Of course there is one precondition to the friction-free circulation of this capital, ie. regional rulers who do not challenge the rules of this game.

- From all said so far, it is obvious that any imperialist interest necessarily infringes upon wealth and prosperity of the masses in our region. Any policy striving towards economic independence, regional development, elimination of poverty and ignorance, will go the expense of the imperialist companies' control over the oil, to the expense of capital investment in the West, and will threaten the regimes serving imperialism.

- In addition to the reasons linked to the regional context, US-imperialist has found itself recently in one of the most severe economic crises it has known since the 1929 stock exchange crash. Therefore it attempts to prove itself in the international arena; proceeding with a strong hand against all types of "rebellious" regimes in the world, it hopes to consolidate its position as policeman of world capitalism. There is no doubt that the present war is underlining the fact that there are no Western states able to compete with US military power.

In the struggle against imperialism in our region we cannot remain neutral. Even if we oppose Saddam Hussein's regime, even if we demand the change of this blood-soaked



Saudi defence minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul-aziz with Schwarzkopf. The Arab alliance with the West is linked to their desire to stay in power



An Egyptian soldier threatens a surrendering Iraqi

regime, in a situation of war against the United States we do not hesitate to line up behind Iraq in her war against imperialism. Imperialism continues to be the biggest enemy of the peoples in the region. Any aggression from its side, irrespective of its reasons and goals, aims to consolidate the control over the social wealth and over the political processes in the Arab world.

Does Iraq threaten imperialist control over the region?

Saddam Hussein's regime did not intend to threaten imperialist rule in the region. The fact that until recently he served as a mercenary of imperialism is the best proof thereof. However, this is not the first time in this century that imperialism, interested in preventing social developments negative to its cause, creates the monster which then turns against his master. This holds true for "Third World" countries, as well as for the relations between the imperialist states.

Let's look at the following examples to clarify this point:

- The reconstruction of Japan and West Germany following World War 2 rested on the shoulders of the United States, which aimed to prevent the rise of Soviet influence and to eliminate any form of social unrest there. But thanks to those reconstruction efforts, these countries have turned into the biggest competitors with US-imperialism for the control over world economy.

- Noriega's regime in Panama was supported by Washington for years, as a response to the national tendencies — in the question of who is to have control over the channel — among parts of the Panamanian ruling class. From the moment Noriega crossed certain political lines, claiming the Panamanian people's right to the channel, the US establishment did not hesitate to invade Panama, to eliminate his regime, and to enthrone another dictator. This example shows that the United States regard themselves as the supreme judge in matters concerning the future of mankind, and this on the basis of her own interests, ie. the interests of the monopolies under her rule.

The occupation of Kuwait by Iraq has challenged the regional balance of power, designed by the West, in two ways: the first challenge refers to the question, who is to enthrone and to eliminate the rulers; the second refers to the fact that Iraq crossed the limits set to her military power, and every change in the fragile balance in our region threatens to upset imperialist control.

The United States and Europe are not so much interested in the question of who is going to govern Kuwait. The problem is that these states are not interested in too much accumulation of power by Iraq, neither militarily, nor economically (ie. Iraq increasing its control over the oil in the region).

"The United Nations, or the so-called international community, have also in the past served imperialist interests. And whenever they did not do so the veto imposed by one of the powers prevented their attempts for an independent policy."

The United States regards this war as a test case to her military power and to her role in world leadership. These are the reasons why the military system concentrates its efforts on the elimination of Iraqi military and economic power. The United States strives to destroy the servant created by her and her European allies, in order to re-establish the pre-August 2nd balance of power in the region.

The specific development of the battles, especially the heavy air bombing, with an intensity unseen since World War 2, aims to

destroy Iraq's military and civil infrastructure, and shows that the "liberation" of Kuwait is only a secondary question in this enterprise.

But how to explain the support given to the US military campaign by the majority of the countries in the world, and especially by the Arab states in the coalition?

The majority of the states in the world support United States policy, since they accept the USA as international judge and policeman.

The United Nations, or the so-called "international community" have also in the past served imperialist interests. And whenever they did not do so, the veto imposed by one of the powers prevented their attempts for an independent policy. Presently, the United Nations' decisions serve the United States by giving diplomatic covering to her plans. The cynicism in the UN-decisions is prominent, given the series of Security Council decisions against Israel in the past, none of which were implemented due to US opposition.

The Arab states, members of the coalition, carry characteristics similar to those of the former Kuwaiti regime. Economically and politically dependent upon imperialism, they regard the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait as a challenge to the regional balance of power, and to their own regimes. These states fear nothing more than their own masses. Whenever the elimination of a threat requires them to line up with imperialism, they do so gladly.

No doubt there are significant differences between the regimes of Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and their motivations for joining the coalition. However, there is one common denominator: ie. their desire to remain in power, to maintain their collaboration with the United States and Western Europe, and their unwillingness to see Iraqi power increase.

Declaration of the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen), Israel

Up the Republic!

AGAINST THE TIDE



Sean Matgamna

Three decades ago the journalist Malcolm Muggeridge provoked a memorable outcry in Britain when he criticised the Queen in an American publication.

It was very mild stuff — she had "the manner of a schoolgirl", he said. Yet the British press went after the rotten swine in full cry.

Some things change for the better. Today, criticism of the Royal Family in the British press is only a little less common than sycophantic stories glorifying pop stars and footballers.

Some of the Royal-bashing is even unjust and contrived — for example, the outcry a couple of weeks ago because one of the Queen's sons, a pilot during the Falklands War and now serving as an officer in the navy, dared, with Britain at war, to play golf when his ship called in at a Spanish port!

What is interesting about these stories is that they testify to a demand for such material. And it is not all just trivial. A number of papers, among them the bluest of the Tory blue, like the *Daily Express*, have recently editorialised that the Queen, the richest woman in the world, should pay taxes like everyone else.

Is the monarchy in serious trouble? The professionally boring "middle class" monarchy shaped in the middle of the last century was nevertheless still enshrouded in awe and mystique. It is increasingly hard in the television era, and when things have opened up quite a bit in Britain, to maintain this combination of bourgeois commonplaceness and supposedly-ancient splendour. The commonplaceness shows through, and the absurdity of the whole institution becomes visible.

It is all still as absurd as when the mid-19th century Liberal Walter Bagehot asked how it happened that the entire political and legal life of Britain revolves in theory around "a retired widow and her unemployed son". How, people are being forced to ask, can this monarchy continue to be the theoretical keystone of the British constitution?

The young "Royals" are mainly a crowd of vastly privileged upper-class twits. Mystique? There is little even to respect! Given a critical press — and Rupert Murdoch is reputed to be something of a republican — the public appetite for "knock-the-Royals" stories grows from what it feeds on.

In the long run this must undermine the monarchy, because people either believe that there is something special, unique, and wonderful about the incumbent nest of Royals, or they don't. There must be more and more people in Britain who don't any more.

Clear-cut republicanism is still as rare as criticism of the Royal Family used to be. It should not be! Socialists and consistent democrats have to be republicans, that is, sworn enemies of all hereditary titles and inequalities.

Republicanism is slowly inching its way back on to the political agenda in Britain. Forward to the Republic!



The army stands by

The break-up of the USSR part 2

Conflict and revolt in Moldova

By Stan Crooke

Of all the national conflicts now sweeping across the Soviet Union, those in the western republic of Moldova are among the most bitter.

Moldova has a poor standard of living, an acute housing shortage, and severe environmental problems, even by Soviet standards. The majority of the population (about 60%) are Moldovians. Russians and Ukrainians make up the bulk of the remainder, apart from the Gagauz Turks who constitute 4% of the republic's population.

The bulk of Moldova (known as Bessarabia in the inter-war years) was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The area to the east of the River Dniester (where the Russian-speaking population is concentrated), however, was never part of Romanian-ruled Bessarabia and was subject to Soviet rule from 1918 onwards.

Under Stalin the Latin alphabet used by the Romanian population of ex-Bessarabia was abolished by decree and replaced by the Slav Cyrillic alphabet, with the aim of driving a wedge between the population and their former compatriots in Romania.

Until as late as 1987 it was forbidden for anyone in Moldova to take out a subscription to a Romanian newspaper or magazine, and it was impossible to buy Romanian-language books in the republic. (Such books were, however, freely on sale in the rest of the Soviet Union, and had to be covertly transported into Moldova.) Police even raided students' halls of residence to check that no-one was listening to radio transmissions from Romania.

Stalin's re-writing of history also aimed to drive a wedge between the Moldovian majority population and the Romanians on the other side of the border: history books portrayed the inter-war period as years of the "Romanian occupation" in which the "Boyar-Romanian occupiers" persecuted "Moldavian communists" (until Stalin intervened to "liberate" the area in 1940.)

As central government has progressively collapsed under Gorbachev, the Moldovian majority population has become increasingly vocal in demanding a restoration of its na-

tional rights. Initially the Moldovian Democratic Movement demanded the restoration of the Latin alphabet, recognition of the identity of the Moldovian and Romanian languages and the implementation of measures to resolve ecological problems and problems of government corruption.

By last year, the demands and actions had become far more sweeping. The republic was renamed Moldova (the former name of Moldavia was ditched as a Russified version of the former), Moldovian was raised to the level of the republic's official language and the Moldovian Popular Front (MPF) was pressing for complete independence from Moscow.

Such developments aroused fears amongst the Russian-speaking minority population. Typical comments by Russians reported in a recent issue of the Soviet magazine "Ogonek" included: "A complete Romanisation of state and social life is underway"; "Moldova is getting ready to jump into Romania"; "The Russians will suffer as a result of this, they will simply be kicked out"; "The centre (in Moscow) is closing its eyes to the coming massacre of Russians".

"National conflicts are encouraged by the Stalinist hardliners who use the growing level of national conflict as an excuse for a crackdown that will strike...all peoples of the Soviet Union with an equal severity."

Russians have reported increased harassment and discrimination. A number of Russians have been sacked from the government service, factory jobs and jobs in universities for not being able to speak Moldovian. Only 1 out of 18 cabinet posts in the Moldovian government is held by a Russian, despite Russian-speakers being over 30% of the population.

In October the Russians living to the east of the Dniester demanded that the Moldovian parliament recognise the establishment

of a Dniester republic, but without success. The following month, the Russians proclaimed the Transdnistrian Republic and organised elections for a government for the new republic.

Just as the Russians rebelled against the Moldovian republican government, so too did the smaller Gagauz national minority concentrated in the south of the republic where they lived since being invited in by the Tsars some two centuries ago. In August of last year they declared their own republic and ratified their declaration of independence by holding elections in October.

The political leaders of the Moldovian majority population have generally responded with extreme hostility to the attempted breakaways by the Russians and the Gagauz Turks.

According to a resolution adopted by the MPF in Tiraspol (proclaimed capital of the Transdnistrian Republic), for example, the declaration of the Transdnistrian Republic was "unconstitutional and directed against the integrity of Moldova and its people". The "destructive elements" who supported its establishment were "ENEMIES (their emphasis) of the Moldovian people".

The resolution instructed "all members of the MPF to prepare intensively for work in underground conditions, with all the circumstances that arise therefrom, and to prepare the basis for a partisan struggle".

When the Gagauz Turks staged their elections in October, over 3000 Moldovians mobilised in the Moldovian capital of Kishinev in order to travel to the Gagauz territory and prevent the elections going ahead. According to Victor Pushkash, deputy chair of the Moldovian parliament: "The Gagauz leaders have to understand that the path they have chosen is ruinous. Otherwise parliament will introduce a state of emergency."

The day following this statement, his threat became reality. Local government in the Gagauz district was abolished, and all public meetings and rallies were banned for two months. Soviet Ministry of the Interior troops were into the area to turn back the incursion by the 3000 Moldovians. Telephone lines were cut off and the area was closed to Soviet and foreign journalists.

The Moldovian political leaders have

claimed that the Russian and Gagauz minorities are being manipulated by Moscow in order to check Moldovian progress to independence. The Gagauz Turks, they argue, are strongly Russified and generally speak Russian rather than a form of Turkish.

Moreover, sections of the Moldovian Communist Party based in the Transdnistrian Republic have published their own manifesto proposing recognition of both the Transdnistrian and Gagauz Republics and the transformation of Moldova into a federation.

While it is probably true that Stalinist hardliners have encouraged unrest amongst the Russian and Gagauz minorities in order to create problems for Moldovian separatists, it is certainly true that recent events in Moldova have been used by the hardliners and military chiefs as an excuse for a clamp-down and a purging of the relatively more liberal elements in Gorbachev's government.

Allegations about events in Moldova figured prominently in the demands of the hardliners when they successfully forced Gorbachev to sack Minister of the Interior Bakatin at the close of last year.

According to the anti-glasnost paper "Glasnost", "the inactivity of the organs of the Ministry of the Interior in the face of the blatant crimes committed by Moldavian nationalists" was proof of Bakatin's incompetence. Petrusenko, a leading hardliner, claimed that Bakatin failed to prevent arms supplies being shipped from Romania to Moldova (!), whilst fellow hardliner Kogan claimed that Bakatin allowed the weapons of the Ministry of the Interior troops sent to the Gagauz district to be handed over to Moldovian nationalists (!!).

In terms of bloodshed the conflicts in Moldova have hitherto lagged well behind those between Azeris and Armenians. But in terms of mutual national hostility, the conflicts are on a par with one another.

At the same time, such conflicts are encouraged by the Stalinist hardliners who use the growing level of national conflict as an excuse for a crackdown that will strike Moldovians, Gagauz Turks, Russians and all other peoples of the Soviet Union with an equal severity.

George Bush must hate this Western

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *Dances with Wolves*

Hollywood sneered at Kevin Costner for making *Dances with Wolves*, a Western, for God's sake!

But with Academy Award nominations in the bag, and the public flocking to see it, he can sneer right back. He's made a hit.

Deservedly so, in my opinion. Yes, it's a bit long, and he overdoses on scenery, but it's nothing like the standard Western, with its stereotypes of bad Indian, good (civilised) white man. It's so determinedly on the side of the Indians that it almost overbalances, but with so many shameful Hollywood films to make up for, that's no bad thing.

Set in 1863, it's the story of John Dunbar (Costner), a cavalry lieutenant transferred from the butchery of the Civil War to the furthest frontier — Indian country — where he mans an outpost singlehanded. The local Indians are the Sioux, and Dunbar is eager to make contact. Unlike the other white men, he doesn't shoot on sight; he wants to know them, to see how they live.

Once he's met them, he's smitten. He goes all the way, living with them, dressing like them, turning his back on the world he came from, yet feeling conflicted when



No normal Western

the Indians question him about the white man's intentions.

He knows the Sioux are doomed, yet he can't bring himself to warn

them; he's still too loyal to his own race. But events eventually force his hand. He has to take sides.

It's all fairly credible. Dunbar's

romance is not so much with the white woman, Stands with a Fist, who's been raised by the tribe, as with the tribe itself. We see all the stages, from infatuation, through misunderstandings and longings, to acceptance and trust.

Infatuation certainly describes Dunbar's feelings, and it seems to cover Costner's as director as well. The Sioux are shown as the last word in harmony — with nature, with each other. When ugliness threatens, it comes from outside, in the shape of the warring Pawnees, who are movie-standard barbarians with punk hair-dos. (To punish them, Costner doesn't subtitle their speeches, the way he does for the Sioux. We have to imagine the evil talk for ourselves.)

Costner is a big enough star now to greenlight any project. It's nice to see him choosing *Dances with Wolves* instead of trash like *Days of Thunder*, one of Tom Cruise's free choices.

I wish Costner hadn't idolised the Sioux, though. He doesn't need to turn them into angels to win our sympathy. They deserved (and still deserve) justice, not because they were "perfect", but simply because they were human beings, deserving of common humanity.

All the same, in the current war-mongering climate, this film is extraordinary, preaching as it does its lessons of tolerance, trust, and solving questions peacefully rather than by land-grabbing and violence. George Bush must hate it, which makes another good reason to go and see it.



Masters of war by Bob Dylan

Come you masters of war
you that build the big guns
you that build the death planes
you that build all the bombs
you that hide behind walls
you that hide behind desks
I just want you to know that I
see through your masks.

You that never done nothing
but build to destroy
you play with my world
like it's your little toy
you put a gun in my hand
and you hide from my eyes
and you turn and run farther
when the fast bullets fly.

Like a Judas of old
you lie and deceive
a world war can be won
you want me to believe
but I see through your eyes
and I see through your brain
like I see through the water that
runs down my drain.

You fasten all the triggers
for the others to fire
then you set back and watch
while the death count gets
higher
you hide in your mansion
while the young people's blood
flows out of their bodies and is
buried in the mud.

You've thrown the worst fear
that can ever be hurled
fear to bring children
into the world
you're threatening my baby
unborn and unnamed
you ain't worth the blood that
runs in your veins.

How much do I know
to talk out of turn
you might say that I'm young
you might say I'm unlearned
but there's one thing I know
though I'm younger than you;
even Jesus would never forgive
what you do.

Let me ask you one question
is your money that good?
will it buy your forgiveness
do you think that it could?
I think you will find,
when your death takes its toll,
all the money you made would
never buy back your soul.

And I hope that you die
and your death will come soon
and I'll follow your casket
on a pale afternoon
and I'll watch while you're
lowered
into your death bed
and I'll stand over your grave
to make sure that you're
dead.

The anti-thinking devices

Television

By Jean Lane

On Sunday morning TV's war began in earnest. Newscasters breached the final frontiers of human consciousness to deal the death blow with a high precision nerve gas which numbs the brain.

The gas is composed of two elements: media lies and propaganda. Its proportions are of such an intensity that it sticks to the individual's brain and causes untold damage.

The long months of preparation for this moment have paid off: constant bombardment of the mind, lowering any possible resistance to the final assault. The collateral damage has been substantial: reports of IRA bombs going off in Whitehall, railway stations, the subsequent cutting off of London from the rest of the country, the imprisonment and deportation without trial of many members of our communities, etc, go by without so much as a flicker of recognition that extraordinary events are taking place.

However, caution is the watch-word. There are still pockets of resistance. People who, as a result of years of training from living under such constant bombardment, will insist on interpreting the news in

their own way.

People, for instance, who will, despite all, continue to see "prisoners of war" as men; "bombed Iraqi civilians" as human beings; Norman Schwarzkopf as an animal. Even Bush and Major as murderers, despite all the attempts to portray them as respectable, thinking people.

The bombardment must continue. The anti-thinking devices must roll in until the last pockets of enemy thought have been crushed. Only then will a lasting peace and democracy be possible: when total control of

the mind has been achieved and independent thought incapable

of rising to take hold of the brains of the people again.



It should be shown on prime time

The Falklands veteran was interviewed next by Emma Freud on TV you always think of veterans to be old by he was young, very young to be called a veteran.

He had been there and described in simple terms the death in the Falklands war. People don't burn, they melt he saw someone with a melted hand he saw someone whose face had melted and another man whose scalp had turned right back little wisps of smoke coming from his head the sickening suffering, almost beyond our comprehension, the fireball came.

It should have been scheduled to be on our sets at prime time

but instead on News at Ten Boys Own images of fast planes and armoured trucks and tanks soldiers decked out like our comic book heroes grim and determined they say with a job to do.

Reporters stand attentively and face the cameras in camouflaged fatigues and report from space in glowing terms how smart is modern technology then belatedly the odd admission that there may have been some casualties, people in this war don't die they become TV war casualties and their numbers and their pain withheld by silence.

The Falklands veteran was now shown on a prime time view and that was the point of it

it's censorship in a subtle way.

Ricky Houston
Edinburgh, 18 February 1991

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 28 February

Huddersfield Poly SO meeting: "Where we stand", 1.00. Speaker John O'Mahony
 Bradford University SO meeting: "Where we stand", 5.00. Speaker John O'Mahony
 "Israel, Palestine and the Gulf War", Leeds SO meeting, 7.30, Packhorse Pub, Woodhouse Lane. Speaker John O'Mahony
 Lancaster University SO meeting: "Israel, Palestine and the Gulf war", 1.00. Speaker Mark Sandell
 Newcastle Poly SO meeting: "Capitalism, socialism and war", 12.30
 Nottingham SO meeting: "Why students should oppose the Gulf war", 8.00, International Centre, Mansfield Road. Speaker Mark Sandell
 Canterbury Tech SO meeting: The Gulf crisis, 1.00

Friday 1 March

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

Saturday 2 March

Workers Liberty dayschool, St Mary's Centre, Middlesbrough, 11.00 start
 Anti-war demonstration in London called by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. Assemble 12.00, Embankment

Sunday 3 March

"Imperialism East and West", London SO educational. Details 071 639 7965

Monday 4 March

Anti-war meeting, Brighton Corn Exchange, 7.30. Speakers include Tony Benn and Bruce Kent
 Media Workers Against the War National Rally: Edward Pearce and John Pilger. 7.00, Central Hall, Westminster, £2.50

Wednesday 6 March

"The fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights", Liverpool SO meeting. 7.30, Room S26, Merseyside TU Centre, Hardman St. Speaker Janine Booth
 Further Education Activists Conference. Manchester Poly, from 11.00am. Contact Steve Mitchell on 071 272 8900
 Labour Against the War national organising meeting. 7.30, Peace Pledge Union, Endsleigh St, London (opposite Euston tube). All Labour Party members welcome

Thursday 7 March

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

Friday 8 March

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

Saturday 9 March

"Women Say No To War" demonstration, 1.00, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2. Organised by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

"Surreal" is no excuse

WRITEBACK

James Shelley did his best defending David Lynch and *Twin Peaks*, (SO 476), but he didn't convince me.

While I remain a keen watcher of *Twin Peaks*, I still find it offensive.

Shelley says I have confused depiction with approval. I disagree. In Lynch's earlier work, especially *Wild at Heart*, the camera gloats over blood, and feasts on scenes where women are degraded. These are recurring themes in his work. Lynch was forced to cut material from *Wild at Heart*

because it was so grossly offensive. He couldn't understand it! He thought it was fine.

Men get very different treatment from women in Lynch's films. Crucially, men are in control. Lynch doesn't challenge that; he makes the most of it.

Shelley compares the ultimate fates of Leo Johnson and Laura Palmer and finds them about equal. Again, I disagree. Laura was raped and stabbed to death in terrifying circumstances. Ronette, the other girl present, is still in terrible shock from the ordeal. It now seems Laura's father was the killer, and that he sexually abused her from an early age. She is first and foremost a victim.

Leo is/was a drug-dealing



Scene from *Wild at Heart* where "the camera feasted on women being degraded"

thug, a wife-beater, and all-round violent, nasty, emphatically not a victim. Yes, he seems like a vegetable at the moment, but he's alive, and showing increasing signs of life. The show has not constantly rehashed the details of his shooting, the

way it has Laura's, with the camera showing her bloodstained mouth screaming in terror as she is murdered. Whether Lynch is exploring the dark side of his psyche or not (and he seems to have a larger dark side than the moon), he's still

making big money out of violence to women and the titillation of underage sex. It's only a small step from 'exploring' to 'exploiting'. Sorry, calling it surreal is no excuse.

Lilian Thompson
Islington

"PR can only help the bourgeoisie"

Thank you for the coverage you gave of the industrial struggle during the war from Sam's and my book, *War and the International*. A mistake has, however, crept into your final footnote.

It is not *War and the International* that is currently out of print, but its predecessor, *Against the Stream*, which sold out within a year of printing, and which Pluto promised to reprint, but have so far not come across with it. Your correspondent (6 February) from the Socialist Society, who is so anxious to destroy the Labour Party's election chances on behalf of the Green Party, or any small Socialist party that might arise (the CPGB perhaps, that has been campaigning for proportional representation for years) challenges me to name disillusioned ex-Trotskyists who have now found a home in the Socialist Society.

I don't like "naming names" much — we have had enough of it from witch-hunters and Stalinists (who, incidentally, also from inside the unions have been promoting this proportional representation stuff inside the Labour Party as well), but since your correspondent has implied that I am in the business of making false allegations, I will have to reply.

Two that spring to mind straightaway are John Palmer and Richard Kuper, apart from the clapped-out fragments of the old "International" group that seems to be in the process of disintegrating into it.

(Incidentally, returning to the subject at the start of this letter, I will never forget the look of contempt on Kuper's face when, as previous superno of Pluto Press, after looking at the manuscript of *War and the International* for all of three days, he passed it back to Sam across the table

with the remark that it was "not something that he would like to put into the hands of young people coming into the movement".)

Far more important than the fate of a particular book, however, is the fate of the whole future of the labour movement. It is not the task of socialists, in my opinion, to advise the bourgeoisie about the best methods of arranging elections within their state. Our task is to try to set up a totally different democracy — a democracy of the toilers.

Your correspondent seems to be indifferent to the fact that proportional representation systems almost invariably produce coalition governments (or, as we 'anti-quarian' Trotskyists might put it, Popular Fronts). Some of these systems, far from increasing the hold of local labour institutions over their elected representatives, allow all the prospective MPs to be nominated in a vast list drawn up by the central office of the party in question.

Does your writer want to risk either of these? He should also, in my opi-

nion, examine the origin of this sort of campaigning within the labour movement. The parties that have been so anxious to promote it have been the old Liberals, the Communist Party and now the Greens. All of these groups have shown themselves to be enemies of the Labour and trade union movement, who would not hesitate to wreck it entirely if their own sectarian ends and petty personal ambitions could be promoted.

For years the Communist Party has tried to push it, occasionally along with such stunts as "tactical voting" at the time when the Labour Party was faced with the threat of the right-wing split-off of the Social Democrats, and the brief (let us hope) Liberal revival a few years ago.

The motives of this organisation are inspired by its Popular Front policies and its dislike of pure labour movement politics, even social democratic ones (in the older, reformist, meaning of the term). But left wing activists within the Labour Party should not be blinded by

this anti-class propaganda.

A coalition government, backed by the Liberals, which placed Kinnock in office would provide him with the ideal alibi for not doing anything at all to advance the cause of the working class — the usual argument of 'do you want the government to fall and let the Tories in again?' in a far more

dangerous and more credible form.

Surely, socialists within the Labour Party should be arguing for the extension of the power of all the institutions of the labour movement, not lending support to the intrigues of its declared enemies.

Al Richardson
South London

Bunker bunk

SO readers may have missed the choicest "explanation" of the bunker bomb.

It appeared in the *Express* of 15 February and is attributed to "some Western sources" and "UN diplomats" in different editions. Whoever "they" might be — if anybody! — the *Express* reports that "they were suspicious that the bombing happened just hours before the Security Council was to meet".

The implication is that besides filling the bunker with civilians, Saddam Hussein arranged the bombing

himself. This drivel appeared beside an explanation from the US Defence Department of how the bunker really was a current military target, and more than 24 hours after the White House had claimed responsibility!

SO readers familiar with Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* will recall that Milo Minderbinder bombed his own airfield in return for costs of the operation plus 10%. So the *Express* gets no prizes for originality. But the editor's recent knighthood was well deserved.

Max Andrews
York

TV detectives: trash and torpor

My brain must have gone pretty limp already; as BJ Siddon (Letters, SO 476) points out, I made a few

blunders in my letter commenting on Siddon's TV review (SO 475).

One point I made about TV versions of detective stories still limps along

unanswered. Certainly there is, as Siddon says, much "polished hardwood, glass bricks and art deco facades" in the Poirot TV series. But isn't that an example of what Siddon's review criticised, the reduction of stories to "a glossy sameness"?

Lavishly-produced trash can be entertaining, and add more to the sum of human happiness than some over-worked "pastiche of angst". But Agatha Christie's detective stories are very unsuited to that treatment.

Christie's characters are all cardboard cut-outs. Her books appeal despite that because there is ingenuity, wit and paradox in the plots (in many of them, anyway: she

certainly wrote duds). They are more like crossword puzzles than literature.

My objection to the TV Poirot is that it squashes out all that ingenuity and paradox. Christie's Poirot is a cartoon character, TV's isn't.

Detective stories with the plot flattened out are even more limp than my brain. TV serves them up because TV is designed for viewers without even that minimal alertness needed to read a detective story. It entertains not by stimulating or amusing, but by lulling us into torpor or smashing us over the head with blood and violence.

Alan Gilbert
Islington

No thriller theory

BJ Siddon and Alan Gilbert should try to understand something: it is simply not possible to theorise about pulp thrillers!

This is the one area of society which is completely outside the scope of Marxist

theory. It can neither be analysed nor explained!

No less a Marxist than Ernest Mandel has proved this irrefutably, in his seminal (etc) study of the genre, *Delightful Murder*.

Tom Macara
South London

Trade unionists oppose the war

"It's now pretty obvious that the Bush administration is hell bent on occupying Iraq", says Peter Heathfield, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers.

As we go to press, Iraq is withdrawing from Kuwait — but US and allied forces are continuing to sweep across southern Iraq.

There may be much more fighting to come, and for certain there will need to be a struggle to stop the US pulverising Iraq and planting permanent military bases in the Gulf.

Trade Unionists Against War explain what trade unionists can do to help stop the war and oppose US and allied military intervention

Trades Unionists Against the War has been set up by a group of trades unionists who are concerned that the Trades Union Congress is supporting the ghastly war which is taking place in the Gulf. Its aim is to change the policy of the TUC from support for the war to opposition to it.

This war has already claimed the lives of at least one hundred thousand Iraqis, mostly civilians, and is now set to claim the lives of many more thousands of people —

civilians and soldiers, Iraqis and members of the anti-Iraqi coalition armed forces.

The cost of this war to Britain alone is already more than £1,000,000. Just the five Tornados that the Defence (read War) Department admits have been lost cost £525 million. We believe this war is a criminal waste of money — money which could be better spent paying for education, health, housing, and other public services.

If all trades unionists opposed to this war work together, we can change the current policy of the TUC and help stop the war.

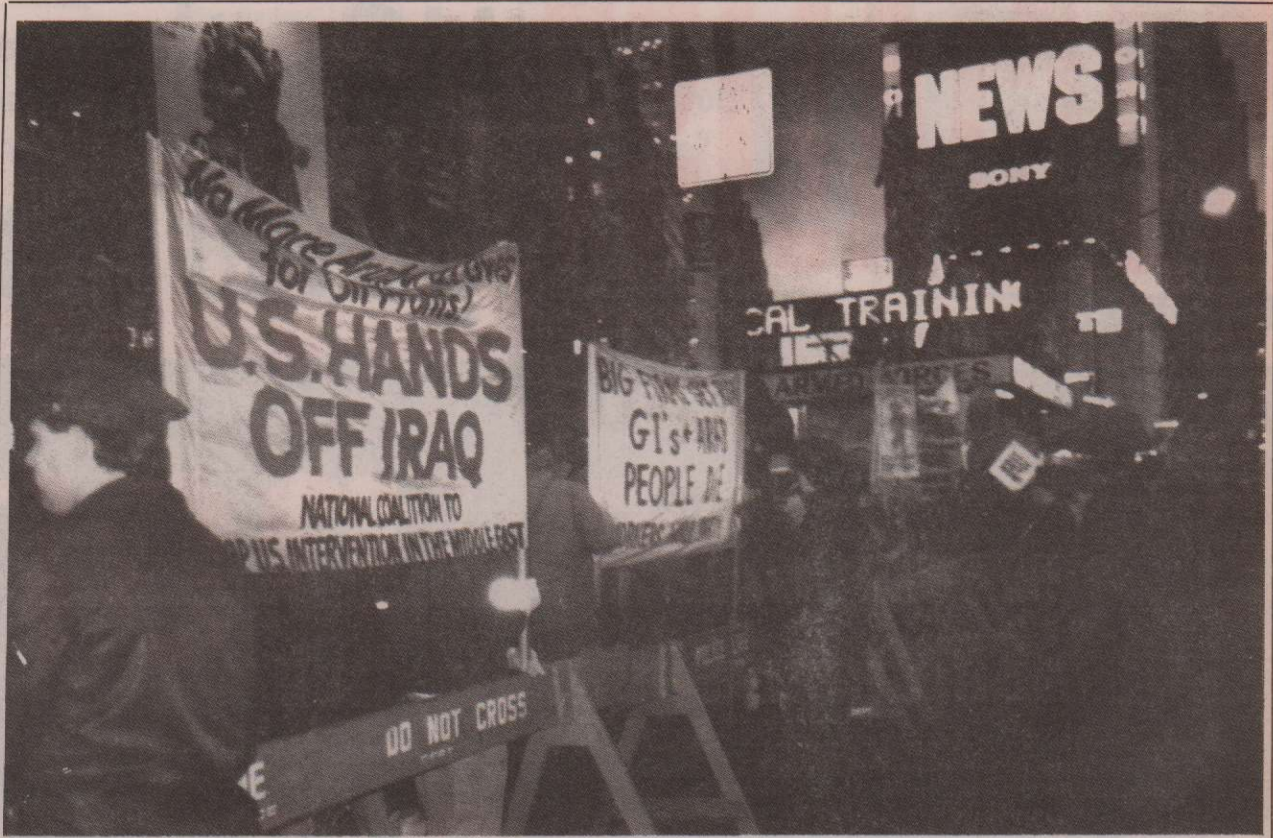
Our first step:

- Lobby of the TUC General Council, 8.15am, Wednesday 27 February, Congress House, Gt Russell St, London WC1

- Conference, 11.00am-5.00pm, Sunday 24 March, Upper Hall, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1

There will be a follow-up conference in early June at which those union branches, chapels and shop stewards committees which cannot send delegates to the lobby or the March conference will be welcomed. We have regular planning meetings every week.

Contact us: c/o Madelaine Davidson, Secretary, Book Branch, National Union of Journalists, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Telephone: (071) 278 7916 ex 229, (081) 451 7606 or (081) 801 2841. Fax: (081) 459 8729



Protesters last weekend in Times Square, New York. Trade unionists have played a big role in the US anti-war movement

Tories call up 'the enemy within'

By Karen Waddington, activist in Wath miners' wives support group in 1984-85, and AEU member

In the 1984-85 miners' strike the men, women and families of the mining communities were fighting for jobs and coal.

They were fighting for a future for their sons and daughters. For jobs with decent training, good conditions and prospects for the future.

Because they dared to stand up and fight for these things they were labelled by the Tory government "the enemy within". They were a threat to the country's democracy.

The tabloid press were crying out about the violence of the miners. Tories attempted to starve the miners' families back to work. It was only thanks to the solidarity

shown by other workers that they were able to keep up the strike by eating in soup kitchens and taking home food parcels.

Now the country is at war for oil and profits, what has

"Many joined because it was their only chance of a job with the chance of acquiring mechanical, electronics, even medical or catering skills for the future."

happened to "the enemy within"?

As always, the people in the front line during wars are the working class. Today

many miners have sons and daughters in the armed forces serving in the Gulf. But five years ago at the time of the strike the very same people were suffering hardships as the Tories cut benefits to miners' families.

Many joined because it was their only chance of a job with the chance of acquiring mechanical, electronics, even medical or catering skills for the future. Apprenticeships for these skills are very thin on the ground in the mining areas. The prospect of war probably seemed remote to them at the time of joining.

Although this country does not have conscription yet, it does rely on economic conscription. Many young working class people face the choice of the forces or the dole.

Now even miners are being

called to serve "their" country.

Mining medics from ambulance rooms across the coalfields who are reservists or TA volunteers are being called up or have already gone to the Gulf. They are to provide a "flying doctor service" to the multinational forces (ie. Allies). One South Yorkshire pit has lost at least two medics from the ambulance room. Many other pits are losing medically trained staff. Others are working overtime to cover for the gaps left by this.

The working class youth of this country has more in common with the working class youth of Iraq than with their bosses. The 1984-85 strike showed where the bosses' loyalties lie. The class war is the war we need to fight, not the bosses' war for oil and profit.

Mixed reaction in the pits

WHETTON'S WEEK

By Paul Whetton

This war could have been avoided. What is truly appalling is the attitude of the Labour Party leadership.

I can understand Kinnock's reasoning: he doesn't want to alienate the service vote, or anyone with relatives fighting in the Gulf. But once you start running after that sort of rainbow, you can never stop. Who next will he try to appease and appeal to?

The Labour leadership could have taken a much higher stand. It may have lost votes, but it would have made Labour the voice of sanity against war and its consequences.

Where are the ideals that are part of the socialist tradition?

In the pit, and in the pubs and clubs, I find a mixed reaction. Certainly there is a lot of jingoism. But I've heard blokes

seriously asking if this is about democracy — or oil. People have been pointing out what Kuwait was like prior to the war, and who put the Kuwaiti royal family in power — and why.

There is more debate than I expected. I expected another "Falklands factor". People are certainly questioning the allies' actions. Good!

Not one of the miners sacked during the great strike of '84-'85 has

been given his job back. I see scabs and scabs' wives and Tories employed by the Labour-controlled County and District councils. Yet none of the sacked miners has been given a job. Local Labour Party politicians talk about how scandalous the dole is. But not one of the sacked miners has been offered a job.

People from the local Labour Party will soon be knocking on doors asking for support. I wouldn't be surprised if some people say "Where was your support when I needed it?"

When the Tory Party had their leadership election they had a "workplace ballot" of those

already elected to office. Can you imagine the uproar if the leader of the NUM said "We're having a workplace ballot and only those already elected to office can participate in it"?

The Tories are guilty of double standards!

But look at the Labour Party. It's going to slightly alter the rules for the leadership election. Nobody can challenge for Labour Party leadership unless he or she has the support of 20% of those who already hold office.

If those rules are good enough to elect the Prime Minister, or future PM, why aren't they good enough to elect the leader of a trade union?

There's not much difference in what the Tories and Labour say when it comes to national legislation about trade unions.

But the only way we could show our displeasure and anger would be not to vote Labour. But that would be a tragedy for the working class in this country. So how the hell are we going to get our voice heard? Party conference is getting as bad as the Tory Party — as stage-managed now.

A lot of work is needed by the rank and file of the Labour Party to redress those issues.

By Liam Conway

Iwonder if SO readers have noticed anything in the media recently about an NUT call for extended strike action over pay. Probably not.

Nevertheless, extended strike action as the only way to win the pay claim is now official NUT policy.

For a union proud of its advertising skills in previous pay campaigns, it might seem somewhat surprising that this year's strategy is to receive not a single media plug. Until one realises that this is an ultra-left stunt by a right wing leadership looking for better or, rather, different excuses to avoid any action at all. Incidentally, it's worth noting that all the other teaching unions are using the Gulf war as their excuse to avoid a pay campaign.

Meanwhile the NUT are currently conducting a canvass of members to see what they think about extended strike action — as if they didn't have a good idea already.

Maybe those who argued for all-out action at the recent local associations conference in Leeds might learn something from this right wing trick about the chances of winning such a position amongst the members — without a major mobilisation process first.

Despite the dishonesty of the

leaders we should use this "canvass of members" to build for action. We shouldn't ask members if they support all-out action, but ask them to support a campaign of escalating action, and send that response back to the leadership. It will be difficult but we could yet hoist them on their own petard.

Of course, the Labour Party leadership know they can rely on the likes of McAvoy to stop any action during the Gulf war, so they won't be particularly concerned by this show of fake bravado, that is, if they know anything about it.

Neither will the NUT leaders be unduly bothered about the latest Labour Party education proposals. Some of you might remember the old three tier educational system — grammar, technical and secondary. You know, the system we fought against for years in the interests of equality and giving working class kids a better chance.

Now it seems that the Labour Party — you know, the party of the working class — wants to bring it back. Their scheme would make it easier for students to drop "academic" subjects like history and geography, so that students of "middle range ability" could be better motivated by more vocational subjects like electronics and design.

The working class it seems have nothing to learn from history — strange the Tories

think they can learn a great deal from it. In particular how to know their place in the rat race.

As usual the Labour Party are simply taking their cue from the Tories. They now appear to be abandoning the notion of comprehensive education in favour of a two tier, ie two class, educational system.

Which brings us back to the NUT leadership. They are opposed to any such tampering with comprehensive education at least in theory. However — and here's the rub — their main strategy for all aspects of education, including teachers' pay, is to get a Labour government elected.

Labour Against the War National Rally
Thursday 14 March
Central Hall,
Westminster, 7.30
Speakers include:
Jeremy Corbyn MP,
Bernie Grant MP,
Dawn Primarolo MP,
Gavin Strang MP,
Dennis Skinner MP,
Audrey Wise MP
Ken Livingstone MP

US plan puppet government in Iraq

Mass non-payment gets Tories on the run!

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

There is now no possible justification for continuing the Gulf war.

Bush's war aims include occupation of all or part of Iraq and the imposition of a US puppet government.

Iraq has had a series of puppet governments. Before World War 2 these were British puppet governments. After World War 2 they were British and American puppet governments. It was the revolution of 1958 which changed all that.

The US war plans — or "peace plans" as they say — will cause permanent instability in the region. They will also lead to increased popular pressure for support for the Palestinians, even if that popular will is not expressed in the governments in the Arab world. That in turn will destabilise those governments.

The past six months have been a very sad time in British history. The leaderships of both parties have stood together to fight a war with no moral justification.

A small number of us have opposed this war in Parliament. Outside Parliament there is a mass resonance for the anti-war message.

The Labour Party membership is coming out with a strong anti-war voice. They recognise the immorality and cost of this war.

We believe in a world order based on justice and the right of peoples to determine their own future.

In the last six months something in the region of £10-15 billion has been spent by the allied forces.

Less than two hours flying time away from Dhahran there are 29 million people facing death from starvation in a matter of weeks. The British government has postponed its aid to Sudan, Ethiopia, and Mozambique because it puts greater priority on prosecuting a war the only beneficiaries of which will be the royal families and oil companies.

This is an immoral, disgusting state of affairs.

Speaking at a Labour Against the War press conference February 26

"We are conducting an organised retreat under fire", was how one Tory MP involved in the poll tax review summed up the Tory about-face.

It's an admission that the government at last recognises what the rest of the country has known for over two years: the poll tax is unworkable.

It's also an admission that the strength of the opposition to the poll tax has forced the Tories to retreat. Now they are desperately searching for a politically acceptable alternative.

Heseltine favours abolition, and a replacement by some form of

By Chris Croome

rating system — just what the Tories ditched two years ago. But he's under pressure from the right-wing within his party to retain some form of individual head tax.

The Cabinet is divided over what to do to restore some of the political credibility that the disastrous poll tax has cost them. In an attempt to keep all factions happy, Heseltine proposes a local property tax based on floor space, plus (the concession to the Thatcherite wing) a "personal premium" on top (ie. the poll tax still, but at a reduced rate).

Dubbed the "bed and breakfast" tax by Labour, this double tax will



Fighting brings results. Photo: John Birdsall

cause even greater chaos: for the local councils who will have to invest more money, and more effort in collecting it than even the poll tax has cost them; and for the government who will find it hard to explain to the electorate why they'll have to pay both rates and poll tax!

The crisis for the Tories over what to do about the poll tax is far from over. It may have been pushed off the front pages by the Gulf war, but the poll tax is still the single biggest domestic issue for most people. Even more than the looming recession, poll tax will dominate the forthcoming May election, and the Tories are worried about the repercussions in terms of lost seats if they don't come up with a viable alternative soon.

Tinkering with the poll tax simply shows up how unjust, and unworkable the tax was in the first place, and sows more disillusion-

ment in the government. One of the main lies the Tories have told over the past two years is that the poll tax is *not* a tax on voting: now, with the announcement that the electoral register will be used as the basis for future local government finance, that lie has been exposed.

For the Tories it's a no-win situation: the political costs are great if they are forced to do a humiliating u-turn and abolish the tax; but the cost might be even greater if they don't.

That the Tories are in such confusion and chaos over the poll tax is due in large part to the success of the mass non-payment campaign, and the wave of industrial action taken by council workers against cuts and redundancies that result from its implementation.

Threats of court action, bailiffs, wage deductions, even jail

sentences, have not been able to deflect the 14 million non-payers whose fight has ensured the poll tax can't work. Every twist and turn the Tories make strengthens that campaign: with the prospect of the abolition of the tax, non-payment levels will surely rise.

We have got the Tories on the run: now is the time to press home our advantage, and step up the action. Councils are still pursuing non-payers, and as it comes to the end of the financial year, attempts to collect outstanding money will mean more use of the courts and bailiffs, more threatened — and actual — jailings.

Despite average poll tax bills of £400, huge cuts budgets are being prepared, with essential services being slashed, massive redundancies threatened. Council workers up and down the country have taken, and are preparing to take, action in defence of jobs and services: the campaign must throw its weight behind such action.

Within the Labour Party, we must escalate the campaign to stop Labour councils victimising the poor, and force them to stand up against the Tories.

We have shown that a mass campaign in the communities linked with the organised muscle of the labour movement can halt the Tories in their tracks. We've got the Tories on the run — now let's organise to finish them off!

Subscribe to Socialist Organiser!

£25 for a year;
£13 for six months;
£5 for ten issues.

Send cheques, payable to SO, to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name
Address

Overseas rates (for a year): Europe £30, US \$90, Australia A\$120. Giro account number: 367 9624.

