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IMPERIALISM OUT OF THE GULF!

workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International



INSIDE: THE GULF CRISIS

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Hands off Iraq!

THE NOISE of Saddam Hussein's tanks rolling into Kuwait disturbed the imperialists' victory celebrations. They were toasting the fact that the Cold War was won, a new era of peace was guaranteed. Or so they hoped.

The first months of this new era have witnessed war fever on a scale not seen for twenty years. The biggest mobilisation of US troops, fighter planes and warships since the Vietnam War is poised on the brink of a massive armed conflict with Iraq.

The British, the French and a host of other countries have joined the task force. The press is waging a relentless propaganda war in preparation for any real fighting that does take place. Thatcher, dutifully echoed by Kinnock, has pledged her full participation in an attack on Iraq when George Bush gives the order.

As usual the imperialist warmongers are telling us that if war comes then it will be for a noble cause. Freedom and democracy must be made safe from the Middle East's very own version of Hitler, according to Bush. No matter that this particular "Hitler" has been in receipt of US support, military and economic, since the late 1970s.

Forget that when a Labour motion protesting Iraq's despicable human rights' record was tabled in Parliament in 1985 the Tories massively voted it down. And please, treat as a mere trifle the fact that France is the west's largest arms supplier to Iraq.

What a sham! What a web of deceit. Until Saddam Hussein upset the Gulf apple-cart by seizing Kuwait in order to control its oil, the imperialists treated him as a friend in need and didn't care tuppence for his poison gas attacks on the Kurds, his execution of the communists and his brutal suppression of the working class.

If the imperialists do go to war against Iraq it will not be to make the Middle East safe for democracy. It will be to make its oil supplies safe for them. It will be to demonstrate that an upstart semi-colony like Iraq cannot threaten their interests. It will be to prove that US imperialism is, even in the post-Cold War era of "peace", the world's policeman capable of preserving the world order with its fighter bombers and Rapid Deployment Forces.

That is why, despite our opposition to Iraq's original seizure of Kuwait, we have no hesitation in saying to British workers, don't support the imperialist war preparations against Iraq. That is why we say, defend Iraq the minute the imperialists open fire.

Immediately, the imperialists are set on imposing an economic blockade to bring Saddam to heel. Thatcher and Bush have promised to impose this blockade with their war fleets. This is an attempt to starve an entire nation. It is an economic war, every bit as reactionary as a military one. It is a war in which children will die of starvation. Why? To prove that imperialism rules.

Iraq is dependent for virtually all of its food on other countries. It once had a fertile agricultural economy. The imperialists decimated it in order to get the labour they needed for the oil industry, and later the other industrial projects that they sponsored in Iraq.

Saddam, it seems, is evil incarnate for locking away foreign nationals in luxury hotels. He is hiding behind children. He is abusing the innocents. Doesn't the *Daily Liar* that tells us this remember that Britain did the same with foreign nationals during the last two world wars—except it put them in concentration camps not hotels? Doesn't it realise that starving innocent people through a blockade is no more honourable than holding them as hostages?

Every worker has an interest in opposing the blockade. If Thatcher and Bush are victorious it will enormously strengthen the imperialist world order. It will strengthen the Tories. It will boost their fortunes at a time when they are flagging badly.

We must set out now to oppose the war. Already committees against imperialism in the Gulf have been set up. Demonstrations have been called. At the moment these actions are being undertaken by different left groups (the Socialist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Socialist Movement).

Today the opponents of the war drive are a minority. To swell the ranks of that minority we must unite in a single campaign against the imperialist war drive. We must strengthen and broaden the forces who can take the message into the working class:

- Imperialism out of the Gulf!
- Hands off Iraq!
- Down with the blockade!
- The main enemy is at home!

April 1990

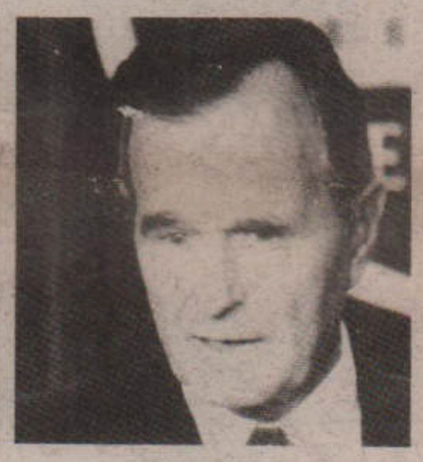
"We want business-like relations"

US Government spokesman on Saddam Hussein

August 1990

"As was the case in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator."

George Bush







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IN brief

● TUC membership fell last year by 247,000 to 8.4 million. This was the largest fall since 1986. It is rumoured that the TUC is holding a Congress in September but we are not sure whether Norman Willis' explanation for the fall will be discussed. Apparently it is partly "due to computerisation of records which give us more accurate reports."!
Neither are we sure how he explained the previous ten successive falls, but he can hardly blame rising unemployment, as he did for years. Maybe, Norm, it could just be that many workers don't see that the unions are worth joining or staying in when the leadership spends its time computerising records instead of fighting on their behalf!

● As Mark Twain once remarked: "A lie is half way around the world while the truth is still tying up its shoe laces." And that is never more so than when there is a war brewing. On 14 August the tabloids and the TV news screamed in unison "British Air Girls Raped" in a reference to Iraqi troops. Star witness was Tunisian Nawal Bel Hadj who "escaped" this fate but confirmed to the *Daily Mirror:* "The Iraqi soldiers were like crazy rabid dogs. They are savages". Her tears were on our screens in the main item that night on the TV news. The next day the five victims turned up unharmed and nonplussed by the allegations. A passing reference was made to this on ITN but the *Mirror* did not feel compelled to put the record straight. More a case of tying the shoes laces together.

● Still on the Gulf crisis, the British oil companies have got reason to be thankful to Saddam. BP's first half year profits were a measly £397 million, down 63% on 1989. But all is not lost. For every $1 increase on the price of a barrel of oil BP Chairman Robert Horton explained that they stand to make a cool £107 million in after tax profits. So if the price stays above $30 a barrel BP should clear an extra £1.4 billion in profits before the year's out. "It's an ill windfall that blows. . ."

● The Queen has been awarded a 50% pay increase from next January. She only gets just over £5 million a year at the moment so the extra £2.9 million will come in handy. Nor will she have to put any of it aside to look after her ageing, but ever lovely, mum. She is due to have her pension boosted by £200,000 to £640,000, which is a lot of gin and tonics by anybody's standards. Edward's pocket money goes up from £20,000 to £100,000 a year because he is, technically at least, no longer a juvenile.
Currently pay settlements for the rest of us are running at 10.2%. Will Norman try and put some members back on by asking for parity with the Royals? Watch this space.

Stop the witch hunt!

BY ERIC HARRIS

SOME FIVE months ago the *Daily Mirror* accused Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield of stealing money from the NUM. After the Lightman Inquiry cleared both men the *Mirror* announced that their accusations had been proved correct. That is Maxwell's logic for you!

The witch-hunt was taken up with renewed vigour by the *Mirror*. Without acknowledging that their original charges were lies the *Mirror's* rat-pack seized on Scargill's links with the International Miners' Organisation (IMO) and Lightman's charge that these links had led to instances of financial "mismanagement" by the NUM leader.

The NUM executive buckled under the impact of this campaign of vilification and initiated legal proceedings against Scargill and Heathfield. Their case rested on the allegation that Scargill had diverted money intended for the NUM into the IMO.

Behind all of the hullabaloo the real aim of the witch-hunt is to attack the militancy of the 1984-85 strike. Scargill represents that militancy. By attacking him the Maxwell press, and the right wing in the NUM and the labour movement in general, are pledging their opposition to working class militancy, past present and future.

How does financial "mismanagement" fit into this? The Tories used the courts to prevent the NUM from having any money to finance the strike. They seized all of the union's funds. Scargill correctly went outside of the framework of "normal" union funding arrangements in order to keep the NUM afloat.

Five years on the Tories have not forgotten that the Great Strike did more to rock them than any of Kinnock and Hattersley's speechifying ever could. And to fund that strike all kinds of financial arrangements were necessary. Scargill was right to make such arrangements.

Many militants are waking up to this as the campaign against the witch-hunt has unfolded. The Yorkshire and North East Area Councils have voted to reject the NUM executive's decision to sue Scargill and Heathfield.

North East miners went so far as to demand a recall national conference to settle the issue. The Notts area delared: "It is time we stopped giving the miner's money away to lawyers", and demanded the NUM executive drop their legal action.

Even Henry Richardson, one of the three NUM executive members sent to investigate IMO funds, has returned and indicated that Scargill has no case to answer.



Pamphlet

Scargill and Heathfield have organised a series of meetings in the mining areas to put their side of the story direct to rank and file miners. A pamphlet uncovering the lies has been produced and widely distributed. Resolutions supporting Scargill have been passed in hundreds of labour movement organisations.

Every militant worker should support their defence campaign. Pressure should be kept up on the NUM NEC to clear them both at its next meeting. The attack on Scargill is an attack on class struggle militancy. We need to organise in its defence and launch our own assault on the cowardly "new realists" of the labour movement who helped defeat the miners in the first place.■

For a democratic NUM

MAXWELL'S *MIRROR* likes to pretend that its onslaught on Scargill is prompted by concern for the ordinary hard-done-by working miner.

It produced a centre-spread on Scargill's houses. Photograph's of Arthur's "castles" were persistently featured. The message is—look at his house and compare it with our own cramped dwellings—it is unfair. Scargill is a scoundrel.

As the Americans might say "give us a break". Barely a day goes by without the *Mirror* and the other tabloids featuring photo-stories about the luxury homes of rock and movie stars. We are all meant to drool at such pictures and fantasise about the day when we might be able to get our own swimming pool and sauna. Turn to the bingo competition and you too may one day buy a dream home like Liz Taylor's or Elton John's.

Answer

But many workers might well ask: "why does Scargill have two houses, why is he able to afford this and we cannot?" In defending Scargill against the witch-hunt we should not forget that the real answer to these questions is that he is a trade union bureaucrat.

The trade union bureaucracy as a whole—not just Scargill—do enjoy privileges that go beyond most ordinary workers. They receive better wages, they get houses and cars paid for by the unions, they get perks, all as a result of their position as unaccountable bureaucrats atop the unions. The result of this is that they are separated off from the mass of workers and some do indeed amass personal fortunes.

Millionaire

Clive Jenkins for example is a millionaire property speculator who owns a whole tract of Tasmania. He used to be the general secretary of the white collar union ASTMS. Gavin Laird of the AEU is on the board of the Bank of England. Scargill's predecessor Joe Gormley, who the *Mirror* loved, missed union meetings on occasions because of his role as a company director with a number of capitalist firms.

While Scargill is not in the same mould as these brazen traitors, he does share aspects of their lifestyle. More importantly, like them, his position as a bureaucrat expresses itself politically in his reformism. In the end he is not prepared to break with the limitations that the reformist policy of compromises and class collaboration impose on the trade union struggle.

Despite his militancy this was true of the 1984-85 strike. He was tireless in his appeals to other workers for solidarity, but he refused to fight for this solidarity against the bureaucrats of the other unions. When the dockers struck in July 1984 and Ron Todd of the TGWU sabotaged unity between his members and the NUM Scargill refused to break the rules of the bureaucratic club by forging rank and file links between the two sections of workers. When Todd settled Scargill accepted it. The same problem was repeated with rail workers and the pit-deputies.

Transformation

But the answer to this is not a witch-hunt against Scargill for the things he did right. It is to fight for the transformation of the NUM into a fighting, democratic union controlled at every level by its rank and file. Its federal structure—which Scargill will not challenge—its narrowly based conference delegate system, its high wages for bureaucrats, all have to be challenged. And to do that we need, as we did in 1984-85, a rank and file movement.

The only guarantee of settling scores with the bosses and their mouthpieces, whether in the press like Maxwell or within the NUM like Des Dutfield, is a national democratic union committed to class struggle policies. A rank and file miners' movement must set that as one of its immediate goals.■

What to fight for

We demand:
- **Fight the witch-hunt**
- **For mass pithead meetings in work time to answer the bosses' lies.**
- **For a national rank and file movement**
- **Elect stewards on every face, every shift, every grade and in every district**
- **For the regular election and recallability of all NUM officials**
- **For all officials to be paid the average wage of a face-worker: no privileges, no careerists**
- **End federalism: one union, one rulebook**
- **For a fighting national union**

EDITORIAL

Labour's warmongers

LABOUR'S LEADERS are like sergeants in the army, and never more so than when there is a war in the offing. Just as sergeants pull the troops into line at the officers' bidding, so Labour gets the working class to stand to attention and join the bosses' war effort.

During the Falklands/Malvinas war they tried to outdo the Tories in their jingoism and war fever. Today, they are just as eager as Thatcher to join the fray and give Saddam Hussein a bloody nose.

Their only sign of dissent from Thatcher's warmongering has been to try and appear as even more fierce advocates of intervention. The day after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait Gerald Kaufman, Shadow Foreign Secretary, urged the government to take swifter action against Iraq.

Kinnock was so confident in Thatcher's ability to handle the "mad tyrant" in the Gulf that he continued his Tuscan holiday until the 22 August, and even refused to back calls from left MPs and the Liberal Democrats for parliament to be recalled.

Kinnock's only statement on his return was designed to show that even on the issue of the fate of the hostages he is just as tough as Maggie:

"Everything that can be done is being done. While I know exactly how I'd feel if had a loved one in that area—and the anxiety I'd feel—I'm sure it's the case that no concessions can be offered or made to Saddam Hussein."

The only real difference in emphasis offered by Labour is their desire to see that the conflict is handled according to the agreed rules of international imperialism. George Robertson, Labour deputy foreign affairs spokesperson advised:

"Saddam Hussein's aggression will only be restrained if the world community plays the whole dispute strictly by the United Nations book."

Warmongering is not confined to the right wing alone. The left are frothing and fuming against Saddam. Of course, they would like the United Nations (UN) "peacekeepers" to do the business, but are willing to settle for a quick strike by the imperialists:

"It would be a mistake to rush to condemn the unilateral decision of the United States President, George Bush, to send substantial American forces to the Gulf. Iraqi armour, having swept through Kuwait, was massing on the border of Saudi Arabia ... By the time a credible United Nations force could have been assembled, the Iraqis could easily have overrun Saudi Arabia and perhaps gone further." (*Tribune* editorial, 17.8.90)

These "lefts" are great preachers of peace, so long as there's no war going on. They want to cut arms spending, ban the bomb and light peace candles on vigils when everything is quiet on the western (or eastern) front. But as soon as the British bourgeosie assembles its fleet and mobilises its army they fall in behind the imperialist leaders and recognise the necessity for intervention.

Their cowardice and knee-bending to the bosses is based on a belief that the world can be made safe if international agreements and treaties are made and enforced by the leaders of the liberal democracies sitting around a table. The UN is supposedly the forum for doing this, for maintaining world peace.

Tony Benn agrees. He has argued that the response of the UN to the invasion of Kuwait shows that it is working for the first time since the Cold War started:

"The sanctions against Iraq, introduced unanimously by the UN Security Council, are likely to be effective in forcing Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait and should be maintained and tightened."

Benn obviously believes that the UN can operate as an independent arbiter of disputes and intervene to right wrongs and tame tyrants.

He is wrong. The UN is an imperialist thieves' kitchen and has been since its creation at the end of the Second World War. It exists to police the international community and defend the existing imperialist world order. The major imperialist power, the USA, has an inbuilt majority in the all important Security Council by virtue of the presence of its allies. The majority of nations have no say whatsoever in the running of the UN interventions.

The actions of the UN in recent years demonstrate that it is far from "independent". There have been several invasions equally as aggressive as that by Iraq of Kuwait. The US invasions of Panama and Grenada, to name two. But the UN did not see fit to send its troops in to restore the deposed governments to power.

The UN functions to legitimise the political and military interventions of the USA and other imperialists as they assert their control over dependent semi-colonies which provide essential markets, raw materials and cheap labour for them to exploit. It is when the imperialists' ability to do this is threatened that the UN is called in to act.

This is exactly what has happened in the Gulf. Firstly the UN economic blockade was agreed to try and force Saddam to retreat. This act of hostility against Iraq has become the pretext for the use of military power in the region, designed to enforce the blockade. It has become a cover for the massive presence of US and British troops in Saudi who are there, not only to enforce the blockade, but to "defend" Saudi Arabia, and its essential oil supplies.

Tony Benn and the other Labour lefts want to salve their consciences by calling on the UN. It is a cover for their refusal to break from their imperialist masters. Worst of all, it fosters illusions amongst the working class that the contradictions that are wracking the world in the imperialist epoch can be resolved this side of the socialist revolution.

The first mass workers' international, the Socialist International, passed irrevocably into the camp of the imperialists when its parties supported their own bosses in the First World War.

The successors in the Socialist International, from Neil Kinnock through to Tony Benn, continue to act against the interests of the world workers' movement through their support for rule of imperialism. This is never more graphically demonstrated than in their response to wars.■

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Pomp and poverty

ACCORDING TO the bosses' propaganda, we are about to enter a new "golden age" of capitalism. As Stalinism collapses across Eastern Europe the ruling classes of the west lick their lips at the possiblities opening up.

Certainly, in the 1980s the rich had a field day. The top 10% of incomes in the USA increased their share of wealth by another 7%.

At the start of the 1980s there were barely a handful of billionaires in the world; by its end there were 157. Massive tax handouts helped speed up the process. In Britain, the highest rate of income tax was cut from 83% at the start of the decade to 40%. Thatcher's latest gift to the rich, the Poll Tax, has further lined their pockets.

All that glitters is not gold, however. All the pomp and vulgarity of the ruling class masks a system of abject misery for millions. The World Bank estimated in 1988 that a billion people—one in five of the total world population—were living in "absolute poverty". Many children are lucky to live past the age of five. The Washington based Worldwatch Institute put the figure even higher, at 1.2 billion people, nearly a quarter of the world population.

Child deaths from hunger in Zambia doubled in the first half of the 1980s. In Brazil, more babies died in infancy in the mid-1980s than at any earlier time. But it is not just in the "developing" world that the poor get poorer. By 1988 in the USA there were 32 million people (including one fifth of all US children) living below the government determined poverty line.

In Britain, at the start of the decade, 6.1 million people qualified for supplementary benefit. By 1985 this had reached 9.4 million and was still rising.

Thatcher's "trickle down" theory of wealth distribution was never more than a con. The "virtuous cycle" of capitalism has left millions destitute.

As Stalinism collapses, the bosses are eager to convince us that socialism does not work and that there is no alternative to the capitalist system. But the bureaucratic dictatorships in the USSR and Eastern Europe were no more than grotesque caricatures of socialism.

The opportunities opening for the bosses to exploit Eastern Europe will not overcome the contradictions that wrack capitalism.

In April 1917 Lenin said that life "under capitalism is bound to remain ... a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor". Over seventy years later the only real alternative to the misery of capitalism remains the real communist society that the Bolsheviks fought for. The working class must seize hold of the means of production and plan society in their own interests.

The freedom of a few to dine at the Carlton while others are free to starve is no freedom at all. As Engels wrote in 1845, "Democracy nowadays is communism".■

Anti-Fascist Action

FASCIST SCUM in the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front (NF—Flag group) are trying to capitalise on the rising tide of racism and anti-Semitism in Europe.

August saw an NF march in Enfield and the BNP organising a rally in support of its candidate in the Tower Hamlets council by-election. The fascists were also out and about harassing people on the Irish Freedom Movement march.

On each occasion Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) attempted to physically confront the fascists. Heavy police protection saved the NF in Enfield, but at the Weavers Green school BNP rally we were able to energetically explain our point of view. The reputation of the BNP's "firm" as the hard men of the East End took a bit of a battering.

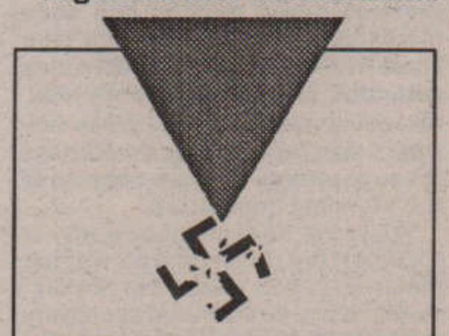
With the increase in the number of physical assaults on black people and the incidents of anti-Semitic cemetery desecrations, much work has to be done.

AFA is committed to building a united working class campaign to combat fascism and racism. To be effective AFA needs support from more individuals and, crucially, through trade union affiliations.

The incident at Weavers Green showed that many people, particularly those organised and mobilised by the Socialist Workers Party and *Militant*, don't yet understand the importance of physically dealing with the fascists.

But equally, the increasing activity of the BNP and the NF in working class localities shows the need for more propaganda, more day to day activity, to stop racists and fascists gaining influence amongst workers. AFA is committed to both areas of work.

Join, affiliate and support its activities.■



Anti-Fascist Action is an open, democratic and non-sectarian organisationcommitted to fighting fascism. For more informationon on how to affiliate and take part in our activities write to:
AFA, c/o BM 1734, WC1N 3XX

Temping offers ...

Bristol is teeming with job agencies—one or two new ones can be spotted every week. These agencies supply workers for every form of work, but the bulk of the temp army is made up of warehouse labourers and office clerks. Temps can expect and get no rights whatsoever.

There is no sick pay, no holiday or health insurance. Workers are hired and fired at will and if they do not like the conditions—some of which are horrendous—well they know what they can do! The going rate for warehouse labourers and office clerks is £3-00 per hour. But the agency can make up to £5.00 on top of this! Temps are nearly all young people who have known nothing else, having emerged into the world of work in Thatcher's decade. The idea that the carreers adviser has little else to offer young school-leavers but a list of job agencies is frightening.

Trade unionists must fight to defend and extend their own rights and win all workers, including temps, into unions. If we don't fight now the future is Victorian forelock-tugging subservience.■

While imperialism's war machines converged on the Gulf a crucial struggle has unfolded in the British sector of the North Sea oil industry. As offshore contract workers wage their biggest battle yet for union recognition and improvements in health and safety ***G R McColl*** *reports on the fight so far and assesses the way ahead for the current battle and for rank and file organisation in the oil industry.*

Oil strikes: the time is right!

ON THURSDAY 2 August several thousand contract workers, from catering staff to electricians, staged a 24 hour strike. It was the most widespread action ever taken against the corporate giants of the North Sea oil industry. As we go to press a series of five such one-day stoppages, called by the unofficial Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC), have hit dozens of the British sector's oil and gas installations.

For the second summer running maintenance and other contract workers, the so-called bears of offshore working, have downed tools in pursuit of the most basic demands: recognition of trade unions, the opening of talks on a model Continental Shelf Agreement and substantial regulation of offshore health and safety. The proceedings of the Cullen Inquiry into the July 1988 Piper Alpha disaster have laid bare the criminal neglect of workers' lives and limbs by the oil companies drive to boost profits.

The oil bosses and their hirelings in the Offshore Contractors' Council (OCC) have responded to the one-day actions with a stubborn refusal to openly negotiate and, in the case of Shell, with vicious intimidation. Offshore workers employed by such Shell subcontractors as Press Offshore faced the immediate prospect of mass sackings and lockouts after the first strike. The bosses have summarily dismissed about 1,500 men and women since the strikes began.

In turn the sackings sparked occupations on platforms and accommodation barges in the Brent field. In defiance of threats to tow the barges ashore and Shell severing phone links between the occupiers and the OILC office in Aberdeen, more than 150 stood firm for over three weeks, leading the bosses to seek and win an "eviction order" from an Edinburgh court.

Meanwhile, Mobil, owners of the Beryl Alpha platform, stands accused ofl cynical strikebreaking tactics. After sacked bears decided to come ashore rather than occupy, the contracting firm, Atlantic Power & Gas, pressed ahead with maintenance work, using already hired Dutch scaffolders and Malaysian labourers who get as little as £8 to £12 per day. Supervisors returned to Aberdeen and went to the OILC to blow the whistle on the use of these workers as welders amid potentially explosive "live plant" uncovered by the usual fireproof blankets. These strikebreakers were also transferred between vessels without the legally required survival suits. The Department of Energy, charged with monitoring offshore safety, showed little interest in investigating the allegations.

While the corporations' paid liars and Tory MPs have vilified the OILC and the bears, the oil bosses have issued contradictory statements about the impact of the industrial action so far. The US-based giant, Chevron, announced the postponement until next spring of safety work previously deemed crucial, blaming the strikes. Chevron was not, however, going to shut down production from its Ninian field platforms. OILC chair, Ronnie McDonald, swiftly exposed the Chevron bosses' real motives:

"The throughput of nearly 500,000 barrels a day is the real reason they are not going fit the valves . . . But they are not shutting the platforms down. They are going to carry on producing and that makes all the difference. It is a fairly elaborate, but not very sophisticated attempt to use the dispute as a smokescreen behind which they hope to . . . keep producing while the prices are high."

The bosses' resolve to keep the North Sea union- free is not in doubt. The trade union bureaucracies of the seven different unions with members offshore have refused to fight to win collective bargaining rights for the bears. They wasted months before finally announcing a ballot on official action, squandering some of the maintenance workers' summer time bargaining power. Once again the anti-union laws has provided a tailor-made cloak for bureaucratic inertia.

Leading AEU bureaucrat, Jimmy Airlie now has the gall to talk about the urgent need for a settlement—not, of course, to assure the safety of offshore workers but to guarantee the flow of oil to "our nation" during the crisis in the Gulf. Such devotion to defending the interests of Britain's bosses and the bitter experience of past fights for recognition, as in 1979, will have convinced many offshore workers to place little trust in their union tops. At the same time this places an enormous burden on the leadership of the OILC.

Despite real problems for Shell and some of the OCC firms the dispute has reached an impasse and the OILC must now up the stakes. The call for an indefinite strike with occupations of as many offshore installations as possible needs to go out very soon. As autumn approaches and weather conditions worsen the logistical difficulties increase, making the swift development of solidarity action through addresses to mass meetings and secondary picketing even more essential.

Already workers at Davey Onshore in Dundee, the McDermott yard at Ardersier near Inverness, the St Fergus terminal near Peterhead and even at the Faslane nuclear submarine base have staged strikes in support of their brothers and sisters offshore. In defiance of the anti-union laws such action needs repeating, but of even greater strategic importance would be solidarity from the relatively well organised refinery workers. TGWU stewards have so far pledged considerable financial support which must be transformed into stoppages at the likes of BP's Grangemouth and Sullum Voe facilities.

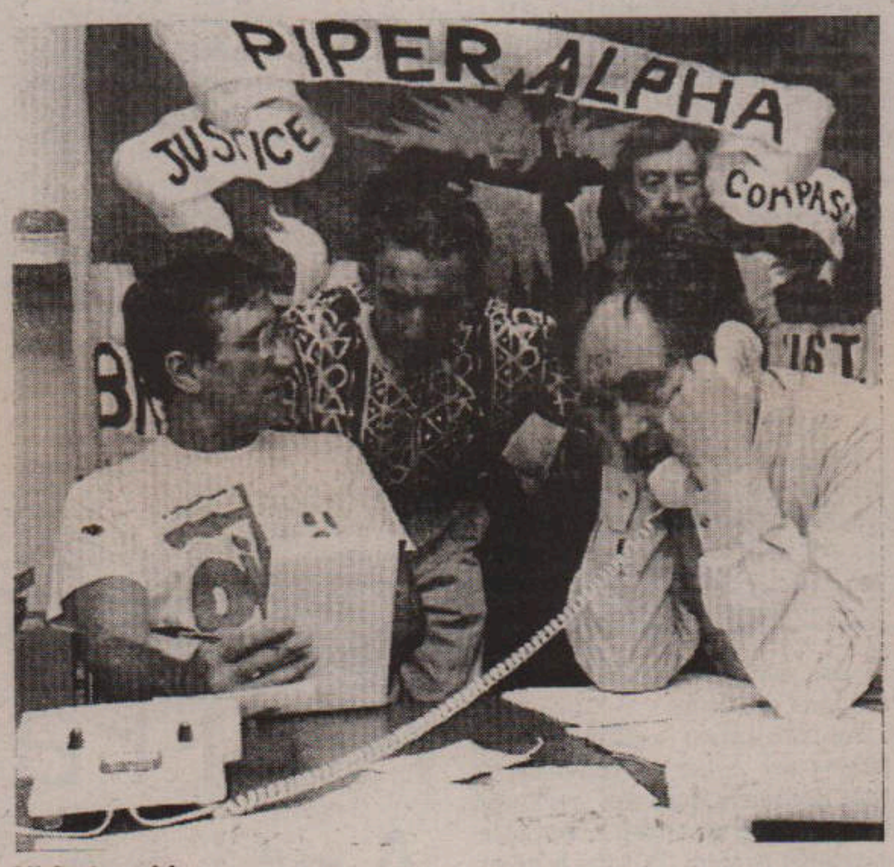
This course of action has been hampered by the decision of the OILC to abide by the court injunction given to Shell by Lord Cameron. After the ruling Ronnie MacDonald announced that the workers still in occupation would end their action. Despite promising further action the OILC has missed an important chance to turn the heat on the bosses.

By defying the court and spreading the action the possibility of winning solidarity throughout the industry and from other sections of workers would have been on the cards. The OILC have made a mistake in not taking this opportunity to press on with their struggle and extend it to one that could open the way to smashing the anti-union laws themselves. The importance of setting this as a goal flows from the certainty that the bosses will now use those laws again and again.

Immediately the task facing the OILC is to regroup its forces and re-launch the action in the coming weeks. There is still everything to fight for. Victory is more than possible and for the bears the spoils would be great. Forcing the multinationals to back down could lay the basis for creating a single industrial union for oil workers as a whole whether onshore or off, in production, maintenance and catering.

The best features of the OILC could be retained with a thoroughly accountable leadership committed to winning a dramatic improvement in all aspects of offshore life: the abolition of casual labour, equal pay and conditions for "third world" workers, improved accommodation to replace the cramped cells, union safety committees to wield a workers' veto over production and maintenance.

The list may seem endless but North Sea workers have endured 25 years of danger and exploitation and there are many scores to settle.■



OILC at work!

Build a rank and file movement

CRAMMED INTO three small rooms in an Aberdeen office block lies the nerve centre of the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC). Here leading OILC activists have co-ordinated the past month's campaign of "guerilla" action against some of the biggest and most ruthless multinational bosses.

Armed with two phone lines, a fax machine and a word processor, the OILC has relied on a widely supported voluntary levy amongst offshore workers to amass a war chest of more than £100,000 in less than two years. A standing committee hammers out OILC strategy and oversees the implementation of daily tactical decisions. It includes a number of victimised offshore militants and cuts across existing sectional and trade union divisions within the North Sea workforce.

The OILC shares certain features with other unofficial union bodies of recent years, such as the National Port Shop Stewards' Committee, decimated by the dockers' defeat last year, and the clandestine "co-ordinators' committee" which initiated the series of one day strikes on the London Underground in 1989 but has now disappeared from the scene. At the same time, however, there are important positive differences which give the OILC the potential to become a healthy rank and file movement.

From its birth in 1988, the OILC has emphasised the need to win the active participation of offshore workers through frequent, regular mass meetings. Even before the strikes began on 2 August, the previous seven months had seen more than 100 such meetings take place in Scottish and English cities with OILC chair, Ronnie McDonald, attending most of them. While full-time union bureaucrats do address these meetings they are not part of the standing committee.

While the OILC might be guilty of spending too much time on waging the propaganda war in the bosses' media, it has contributed decisively to the emergence of *Blowout*, the offshore workers' own paper. This lively, eight page monthly with a circulation of 15,000 gives an indication of what union journals could be. It regularly carries two packed pages of letters from offshore workers, their partners and families. Among the issues raised have been the situation of women workers' offshore, workers' control over hiring and the creation of a single industrial union for oil workers.

In spite of these major achievements the fate of the OILC hinges on how it resolves its ambiguous relationship to the trade union bureaucracy which has tolerated it as a body capable of efficiently doing "the dirty work". The seven unions with members offshore have issued statements dissociating themselves from the strikes called by the OILC, while full time officials like the EETPU's Bob Eadie talk to journalists about "informal negotiations" with the bosses without even consulting the OILC.

At best the bureaucrats pledged on 16 August to stage ballots on an official, all-out strike. Without the bosses' co-operation, these ballots will undoubtedly run foul of the anti-union laws. To no-one's surprise the bosses are not co-operating. Even so the OILC refuses to make a public break and openly criticise the union leaderships. There are disturbing similarities between its current position and that of the National Port Shop Steward's Committee which recognised the need to defy the Tories' anti-working class measures in order to win but would not attack Ron Todd and the TGWU executive for their abject surrender to the courts. By the time the stewards finally called for an unofficial strike they proved unable to extend and sustain it beyond a handful of militant ports.

In the current battle the OILC's subordinated position to the backroom dealing of the union tops relates directly to its lack of a firm position on the defiance of the law. On one hand much of the action organised or endorsed by the OILC has been technically illegal, yet an OILC representative was quoted as saying: "We're not in the business of breaking the law" (*Scotland on Sunday* 19.8.90), in response to Shell's attempts to obtain a court order evicting occupiers from platforms and barges in the Brent field. Given the bosses' bitter determination to resist offshore unionisation and the strategic importance of North Sea oil to the British state (magnified by the Gulf crisis) the question of the law has arisen again and the OILC have complied with the courts in ending the occupation.

The experience of the OILC has highlighted the strengths but also the limits of trade union militancy. The undoubted courage and commitment of its leading activists, and their clever boxing with the bosses, puts the bureaucrats to shame. To win, however, internal democracy and innovative tactics are not enough. For a rank and file movement to survive and grow, especially in the present hostile climate, it needs to make hard choices of a political character.

Amid the current struggle the obvious duties of communists include winning financial support and industrial solidarity for the OILC and the offshore workers it has mobilised. But there is also the need to argue with activists for a perspective which is consistently anti-bureaucratic and a programme which links their ongoing fight to the class struggle as a whole and builds a bridge between the immediate battle and the necessary goal of abolishing the bosses' profit system itself. To achieve this the best militants must be won to a revolutionary organisation—a revolutionary party.■

SUPPORT THE OIL WORKERS

March and rally called by the OILC and Aberdeen Trades Council
Assemble at 11·00am Saturday 1 September, Rubislan Terrace for an 11·30am march to Beach Boulevard Ballroom

Send resolutions, messages of support, financial donations to:
OILC, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB1 ZNB

Liverpool dares to fight again

BY NICK STONE

WHEN LABOUR'S NEC expelled Derek Hatton, Tony Mulhearn and other *Militant* supporters in Liverpool in 1986 it was obvious that they would not be last sacrifices to the cause of Kinnock's "New Model Party". As many on the left said at the time, failure to successfully resist the expulsions of *Militant* would lead to more. Now anyone who tries to resist the effects of Tory central government policies is at risk.

So when the NEC suspended 29 Liverpool councillors, the District Labour Party and Women's Council it was no great suprise. Moreover, the actions of the remaining 33 right wing Labour Party councillors illustrate at a local level what Kinnock has in store for the working class should he ever succeed in taking office.

Since their re-election in May the right wing have ended grant-aid to the Drug Free Unit, which now faces immediate closure; cut financial help to the Trade Union Resource and Unemployed Centre and started to prepare redundancy notices to the workers at the Centre; broken with their election pledge to oppose rent increases by pushing through a £4 a week rise for council tenants

Denounced

In 1986 the Labour Party council leadership borrowed money to build 5,000 council houses, for which they were denounced by the right. Under the leadership of the right some 70,000 council houses stand in need of urgent repair. Last year the council sold off £64 million worth of council property to repay the council's debts to finance houses.

In 1987 a council poverty sub-committee was established. This has now been abolished, its last report having revealed that 180,000 (40%) of people in Liverpool live in "real poverty"; that is, they lack three or more basic necessities such as a bed for every family member, money for heating and for public transport. Nearly half of the city's black population live in these conditions or worse.

The government's latest unemployment figures show 34,000 out of work in the city but a local charity insists that the figure is nearer 56,000, or one in four workers.

Promise

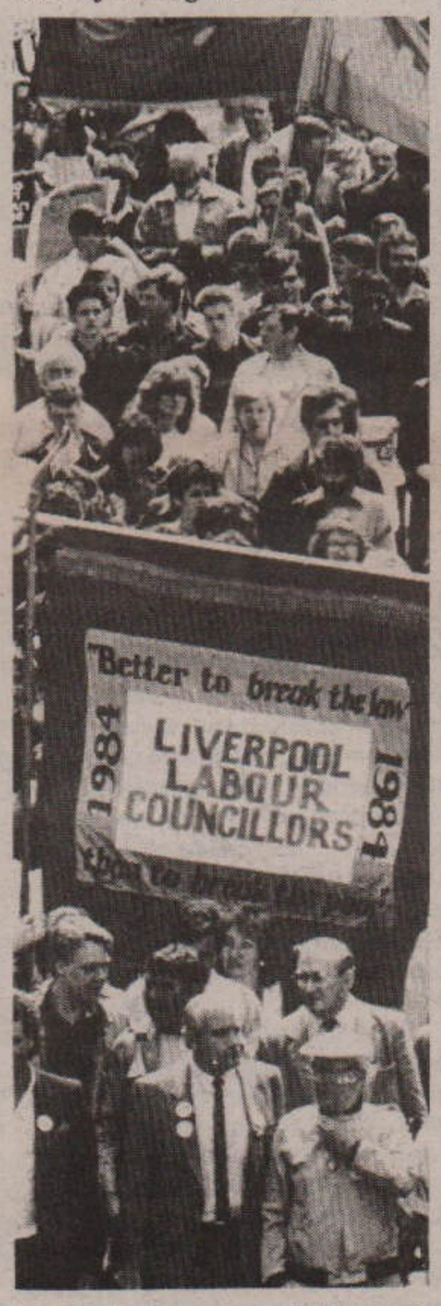
In May this year, on a promise of opposition to rent increases and the Poll Tax, Labour won eleven new seats. On the back of the right wing's attacks, however, only 1,300 people turned out to vote in the recent Tuebrook ward council by-election and the Liberals took the seat. The right now depend upon Liberal Democratic support to run the city.

The last Liberal administration, which ran Liverpool until 1983, slashed 4,400 council jobs and cut the home help service until it was the worst in the country. Can things get any worse? Yes, is the short answer if the workers of the city do not resist. Council leader, Harry Rimmer, is determined to reduce the council's £3 million budget shortfall.

Happily, within the council workforce there does exist the basis and the spirit for a fightback. Twenty-eight environmental health staff have already walked out over the council's attempts to deduct seven weeks pay from them after an earlier five week strike. Now, 95 Poll Tax workers and telephonists have voted for indefinite strike action in solidarity with them.

It is the strength of working class resistance to the council's cuts which will determine whether Kinnock's hit men succeed in making workers pay for Labour's refusal to lead a national fight against the Thatcher government. Anger needs to be channelled if it is to be effective. A city-wide council of action needs to be built from the bottom up which can link the council workers with those who depend upon their services. A fight must be waged for all-out strike action and occupations, drawing in tenants, parents, youth and community organisations to forge a campaign which can knock the council off its present course.

"Anti-cuts" councillors must be forced to fight for an illegal deficit budget that can bring about the funds for a massive and visible increase in jobs and services, so that the city's workers can see quickly that there is something worth defending by militant direct action when the auditors and financiers close in on the city. Councillors who are not prepared to launch such a fight should resign. *Militant* dubbed Liverpool "the city that dared to fight". In *Militant* they did not get the leadership they deserved but the fight was not a futile gesture. Important lessons were learned and this time the city can fight and win.■



Left gloss on witchhunt

BY JULIAN STANSFIELD

IN THE last three months, the Labour Party's National Executive Committee has suspended 29 Liverpool Labour councillors. Across the country Labour Party members are being driven out of the party and councillors are being forced to resign, all for opposing the policies of the Kinnockite right wing.

***Socialist Organiser* (SO) was judged to be a "proscribed organisation" by the NEC, which acted as judges and jury, gave SO no opportunity to submit a case for the defence.**

In Manchester, 12 Labour councillors have been removed from office and barred from attending conferences outside the city—all because they refuse to pay the Poll Tax. In Brighton six councillors have been expelled for voting against the implementation of the tax. Similar witch-hunts have taken place in Gateshead, Wallsend, Bristol and Morecambe.

Kinnock wants to turn the Labour Party into a party the bosses can be proud of. He is determined to break any working class opposition to his plans. The compulsory re-selection of MPs, a victory hard won by the left in the early 1980s is to end. The party's annual conference is to become a stage-managed rally, constituency parties will no longer have the right to put resolutions to conference; policy will be debated in "policy forums". The forum's documents will be amended by the NEC.

While the Labour leadership has always trampled on conference decisions, if Kinnock gets his way conference will become a cheerleader for whatever the leadership wants. As Larry Whitty, the Labour Party general secretary, put it, "The priorities for legislation and expenditure . . . will continue to be the job of the parliamentary leadership".

The soft left around *Tribune* and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee has decided to preserve its local power-bases rather than offer up any resistance to Kinnock's assaults. In 1986 the Liverpool Labour Co-ordinating Committee colluded with the NEC in its attacks on the Militant Tendency in Liverpool. Now, we find the likes of Clare Short lining up to cheer on the witch-hunt of SO. Writing in *Tribune* (17.8.90) she admits to a "deep revulsion to the ideal [sic] of expulsions because we believe in democratic debate", but argues nevertheless that "if we allow our distaste for expulsion to leave us open to infiltration by such groups, we are damaging the capacity of the Labour Party to represent the needs and views of Labour voters". Suspended Manchester councillor Sam Derby summed up the soft left's strategy and bankruptcy when he said, "they're trying to to run capitalism till we get a Labour Government but by then they won't know the difference".

Kinnock's purge of socialists and class fighters in the Labour Party must not go unopposed. Labour Party conference must be bombarded with emergency resolutions opposing all expulsions and calling for the restoration to party membership of those already expelled. At conference, delegates should vote to throw out the NEC report which recommends the expulsions.

The anti-working class role a Kinnockite Labour government would play in the future will be made all the easier if the voice of socialist opposition is silenced now.■

Local Associations Conference on Salaries

called by ***Socialist Teachers Alliance*** *and the*

Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union

Saturday 15 September 11.00am

Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, WC1

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Oil wars

MANY PEOPLE recognise that the Gulf crisis is all about oil, not democracy or national rights; the right to extract "black gold", to profit from it and to gain secure access to it. All else is secondary. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, no less than the USA's militarisation of Saudi, had the question of control of oil at its heart.

Iraq and Kuwait are both members of the 13 strong OPEC club. OPEC commands about two-thirds of the world's oil reserves. Two-fifths are under the territory of Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi.

Whoever controls them is in a fairly strong position. But OPEC members have not always seen eye to eye. The nature of their respective oil interests opens up differences between them over issues such as price levels and their share of the market.

Iraq is a country hungry for dollars. Since the end of the Gulf War it has needed more oil export revenue to pay off its debts, finance its million strong armed forces and rebuild its economy. That is why Iraq favours as high a price for oil as possible. Within OPEC it argues for a strict observance of quotas on the cartel's collective output so that the price can be held. Exceeding production targets leads to oversupply and falling prices, which does not please Saddam.

Kuwait is, or rather was, a small country which did not pretend to diversify its economy much beyond oil. It had lots of cash, no debts and was therefore not so hungry for export revenue. In fact, it preferred to keep production up. This lowered prices and forced its competitors out of the frame, allowing it to capture an even bigger share of the market.

In addition, Kuwait had become a big investor in "downstream" activities connected with oil production, such as refining and even retailing petrol at the station forecourt (the "Q8" garages in Britain). This reinforced Kuwait's desire for low prices since any rise in prices would reduce the amount of petrol sold.

This clash of interests came to a head earlier this year. Up until Easter oil had been kept at around $18 a barrel for a year. Then the price fell sharply to around $14, due mainly to Kuwait's overproduction.

Saddam was not a happy man. He demanded that OPEC raise the price of a barrel to $21 and moved troops to Kuwait's border. OPEC agreed. Spurred on by Kuwait's readiness to back down, but sure that the agreement would not stick for long, he decided to pay a visit to Kuwait—along with tens of thousands of his troops. The rest is either recent history or uncertain future.■

Recession and oil

"SADDAM HUSSEIN . . . has probably brought down the final curtain on the great economic upswing of the 1980s." announced the *Financial Times* on 10 August. A fortnight later the price of a barrel of oil reached $32, its highest level since the present world economic upturn began in 1982.

This is double the average price in July and underlined the bosses' fears that a new world recession would be precipitated. Between the beginning and end of August stock market share values dived between 11% (UK) and 23% (Japan) in fearful anticipation.

In tabloid folklore, if not in the more serious press, it was oil price rises in 1973 and 1979 that caused the last two world recessions. In the two years before 1974 oil prices went up fivefold, and in the two years to 1980 they doubled. Deep and generalised recessions followed.

But the price rises did not cause the recessions. In both cases the world economy was in serious trouble before the rises. Profits and output were collapsing, inflation was steeply rising.

In fact the first OPEC price rise of 1973 was in part a defensive measure by the oil states since they had seen the real value of a barrel of oil plummet as a result of escalating inflation in the west after 1969.

The OPEC rises did have the effect of synchronising the recessionary tendencies among all the leading industrialised countries, but that was all. So how do matters stand with this recent doubling of prices?

At one level the bourgeois pundits are more relaxed, despite the fact that recession has been creeping up on the world economy for most of this year. They point to a number of comforting facts: oil stocks are greater now, and other OPEC countries can make up for most of the fall of world output lost from Kuwait and Iraq. Also, oil consumption in the west, per unit of GDP, is less than in the 1970s.

But even if the present panic subsides and prices fall back to around $25 a barrel, this will still add about 1.5% to average inflation and cut up to 1% off annual growth. Japan and Europe will suffer least and the USA most.

This comes at a time when the USA was already hovering on the edge of a recession; its present annual growth rate is a little above 1%. Its financial system is in very bad shape and all imperialist governments are inclined not to accommodate to inflation (by government spending) in order to boost falling output. So recessionary tendencies everywhere are likely to increase.

The USA could well fall into a serious recession. If this happens then the other major imperialists in Japan and Europe cannot expect to ride it out. The US market is a major outlet for their exports and they would suffer.

The Eastern European countries charting a course to capitalism are likely to be hammered. At current prices oil imports will take all (and more) of Bulgaria's export earnings, all of Czechoslovakia's and over a third of Poland's. This will severely dent their hopes of avoiding deep economic slump in the next year as they embrace, the virtues of the market. It will also give them a quick lesson in its vices.

Should blockade turn to war in the Gulf then slump is certain: the whole of OPEC oil output in the Gulf would be badly hit and as this accounts for 20% of world production a massive economic contraction would ensue.■

The Arabian Peninsular was not the first victim of the self-serving intrigue of imperialist powers. The arbitrary drawing of state boundaries was practiced with devastating effect in the Balkan Peninsular in the years leading up to the first World War. ***Mark Abram*** *looks at Trotsky's analysis of the original case of "Balkanisation".*

The Balkan powder keg

IN THE early nineteenth century the right of peoples or nations, who share a common language and culture, to live in their own state was an aspiration with considerable support in capitalist circles. After all, a unified territory, market and currency were essential tools of capitalist exploitation.

But by the end of the century this nationalist goal of bourgeois revolutions everywhere was placed on one side by those capitalist powers that had matured into imperialist ones. Countries such as Russia, Austria-Hungary, France and Britain had regional or even global economic interests. Investments, profitable trade routes and extensive loans spread outwards from these countries across the globe..

These interests needed protecting from aspiring local nationalists and from the rival interests of the competing imperialist powers.

To this end the democratic desires of local populations for freedom and statehood were ignored and often brutally suppressed by the "great powers". One area that suffered more than most from imperialist intervention was the Balkan Peninsular.

Trotsky described the situation that prevailed there in 1908 as follows:

"The Balkan Peninsular . . . is divided between six independent states: Greece, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro, together with the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the six independent states, each of which has its own dynasty, army, currency and customs system, there live many nations and races, divided into separate fragments: Greeks, Turks, Romanians, Bulgars, Serbs, Albanians, Jews, Armenians, Gypsies . . . The frontiers between the dwarf states of the Balkan Peninsular were not drawn in accordance with national conditions or national demands, but as a result of wars, diplomatic intrigues, and dynastic interests. The Great Powers—in the first place Russia and Austria—have always had a direct interest in setting the Balkan peoples and states against each other and then, when they have weakened one another, subjecting them to their economic and political influence ."



The Balkan Peninsula before the wars of 1912—1913

Change

The dynamic for ceaseless change in the Balkans was provided by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. For centuries its power had spread far from Constantinople. But the development of industrial capitalism in central and Northern Europe had seen Turkey and the empire stagnate. It was incapable of holding on to its possessions in the Balkans faced with the challenge of fledgling national movements and the colonial appetites of the other imperialist powers.

As early as 1878 Austria took control of the Turkish province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Congress of Berlin ratified this move and as Trotsky noted:

"The states that today occupy the Balkan Peninsular were manufactured by European diplomacy around the table at the Congress of Berlin in 1879. There it was that all the measures were taken to convert the national diversity of the Balkans into a regular melée of petty states."

Chief victim in this process was Serbia. Possessed of a large independent landowning peasantry Serbia had emerged from the Congress with a state about the size of Scotland. It was denied access to the Adriatic sea and tens of thousands of Serbs were trapped in the surrounding states. In Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mac–edonia and Hungary large numbers of Serbs were effectively denied their right to be part of a larger Serbia that all the logic of geography and history suggested should have existed.

War was inevitable. The development of capitalist relations, slow and uneven as it was in the Balkans, was creating the objective need for an all-Balkan political and economic entity. Austria-Hungary wanted to fill the vacuum created by Turkey's demise but since the Crimean War of the 1850s this was beyond the Habsburgs' capacity. Moreover, France, Britain and Russia (the Triple Éntente as they were known after 1903) would not tolerate such an extension of Austria-Hungary's imperial ambitions.

The crumbling Ottoman edifice was bound to lead to attempts by Balkan nationalities to construct independent states out of the debris. But, as Trotsky foresaw in 1910, if successful revolution from below did not provide the impetus to the creation of a Balkan Federation then:

"State unity of the Balkan peninsular can be achieved from above, by expanding one Balkan state, which ever proves strongest, at the expense of the weaker ones—this is the road of wars of extermination and oppression of weak nations, a road that consolidates monarchism and militarism."

Two years later in the autumn of 1912, Trotsky's prognosis was vindicated. Turkey was in an advanced state of collapse. Meanwhile the Balkan states, each with their own territorial and national ambitions in the peninsular, had made preparations for war with Turkey. The Balkan League (Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece) was formed in May 1912 to co-ordinate their attack on Turkey and agree a division of spoils.

Serbia wanted to enlarge its territory to include as much of its people as possible. Although carried through by war Trotsky understood that "at bottom this striving is irresistible, historically progressive".

But under the rule of a reactionary monarchy there was also a darker side to Serbia's strivings. Its own drive east to the Adriatic Coast brought it into conflict with the Albanians of that area. In addition Serbia was quite prepared to drive its borders south into Macedonia and incorporate, by force if necessary, non-Serbs in the process.

Defeat

Between October and December 1912 the Balkan League countries inflicted a major defeat on Turkey. While Austria-Hungary and the Triple Entente shed no tears they wanted to ensure that Serbia would be deprived of an Adriatic coastline. They feared it becoming a strong regional power that could threaten their interests. Under the threat of war Serbia was forced to recognise the creation of the new buffer state of Albania. Imperialism had succeeded in further "Balkanising" the region.

Trotsky and Lenin both recognised that the causes of the war against Turkey were lodged in the preceding decades of imperialist manipulation and the denial of national rights. They supported the struggles and welcomed the successes of the Balkan League. But they were acutely aware that the petty tyrants and oligarchs who ran these small states were driven by more than just the legitimate desire to unite the "nation". The roots of the second Balkan war from late June 1913 lay in the conflict of these oligarchies against each other.

Bulgaria and Serbia sensed that conflict between themselves was necessary to divide Mace–donia. Greece too wanted to extend its northern borders at Macedonia's expense. Meanwhile Romania entered the fray against Bulgaria for some of its disputed territory. In the ensuing war Bulgaria was badly beaten, so much so that Turkey was able to regain land lost in the first war.

Trotsky, working as a journalist in the Balkans during both wars, talked to many left wing socialists and workers in Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania. While there was a genuine desire for national unity there was also a recognition by the class conscious vanguard that their class interests ran counter to that of their rulers. As one Bulgarian engineer remarked bitterly to Trotsky:

"Our miserable rulers only want to gather the strength to try once more a bloody settlement of accounts with our neighbours. But we think that what is needed is to settle accounts with those in each country who are to blame for our woes, and with our combined forces to build a new order in the Balkans."

What was the correct form for the new Balkan order that the workers strove for against imperialism and against the petty national chauvinists?

Trotsky aptly summed up the results of the two Balkan wars when he said:

"It must be said, therefore, about the new boundary lines in the Balkan Peninsular, regardless of how long they may last, that they have been drawn across the living bodies of nations that have been lacerated, bled white, and exhausted. Not one of these Balkan nations has succeeded in gathering together all its scattered fragments. And, at the same time, every one of the Balkan states . . . now includes within its borders a compact minority that is hostile to it."

Serbs

This was as true for Serbia as anyone. Serbia had gained most; it had doubled the size of its territory and while the Serbs living within the Turkish empire had been liberated there were still Serbs living under Habsburg rule in Bosnia, Croatia and southern Hungary.

To this unstable and still oppressive settlement Trotksy argued that:

"The only way out of the national and state chaos and the bloody confusion of Balkan life is a union of all the peoples of the peninsular in a single economic and political entity, on the basis of national autonomy of the constituent parts. Only within the framework of a single Balkan state can the Serbs of Macedonia, the Sanjak, Serbia, and Montenegro be united in a single national cultural community, enjoying at the same time the advantages of a Balkan common market."

For that goal to be realised it was necessary to overthrow the emerging national bourgeoisie and landowning classes who, by their wars, were seeking to broaden the scope of their own class dictatorship and find a place as a subaltern regional power under the tutelage of one or other of the main imperialist nations. Until then Trotsky was aware that the national antagonism fostered by imperialism would not go away. On the contrary as he said:

"The Eastern Question burns still, discharging poison like a frightful ulcer, in the body of capitalist Europe."

Decline

That ulcer burst in July 1914. Austria-Hungary was desperate to arrest its own decline as a front line power and lyingly blamed Serbia for being behind the assassination of the heir to the Habsburg throne while he was on a visit to Bosnia. Austria, egged on by Germany, declared war on Serbia

Germany was searching for a pretext to launch a war in Europe which would enable it to repartition the colonial possessions of Russia, Turkey and France, possessions it had long been deprived of. The first imperialist world war had begun.

The Balkans, and the conflicts they gave rise to, were a direct product of imperialist rivalry. The peoples of the regions were pawns in the fiercely competitive struggle between the "great powers".

Today in the Middle East all of the problems of the Balkans are coming to the surface. This region has become the "powder keg" of world politics, just as the Balkans themselves were on the eve of the 1914 explosion.■

The prophet misunderstood

Trotsky by Tony Cliff
Vol 1 —Towards October (1879-1917)
Vol 2 —The sword of the revolution (1917-1923)
Bookmarks £6.95 each.
Reviewed by Jack Tully

STRANGE BUT true: in the fifty years since Trotsky's assassination, only two biographies of any worth have been published in English. The first, by Natalia Sedova, Trotsky's widow, and Victor Serge, had the advantage of a wealth of personal reminiscences, but suffered from its brevity.

The second was Isaac Deutscher's three volumes: *The Prophet Armed*, *The Prophet Unarmed* and *The Prophet Outcast*. Deutscher's brilliant style and broad historical sweep made his biography the definitive version for over thirty years. However, the second and third volumes were marred by his softness on Stalinism. Since he wrote the work a wealth of further material on and by Trotsky has become available, prompting two centrist biographers of Trotsky to contend for Deutscher's crown.

The first and most successful attempt came from French Lambertist Pierre Broue in 1989, yet to be translated into English. This left the field open to Tony Cliff, leader of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), to add his three volumes, the first two of which have now been published.

Cliff opens his first volume with an attack on Deutscher's view of Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism which correctly claims that Deutscher "has thrown out the kernel of Trotskyism and kept merely the husk. Any affinity to Trotskyism is only extrinsic and verbal—the spirit of the revolutionary fighter is completely missing." (pp17-18) But it remains to be seen whether Cliffs version will be any better. The signs are not promising.

To understand Trotsky's mistakes and to name the method behind them—centrism—is beyond this biographer

As with most books from the SWP stable, these volumes are afflicted by an overfondness for quotation. In the second volume this takes on outrageous proportions, with nearly half of the text occupied by other people's work. They should insist on a cut of the royalties.Occasionally this scissors-and-paste approach to biography works.

Like Deutscher and Broue, Cliff has written a good introduction to Trotsky's building of the Red Army and the debates on military questions which took place during the Civil War. He includes material on 1905 and 1917 from the Russian edition of Trotsky's works which is not available elsewhere.

Fundamentally, however, this method hinders more than it helps. The 50% of the volume that is written by Cliff tends to be limited to linking the quotes with a bit of chronology or "applaud" signs—"What a magnificent description!", "What an example of intellectual honesty!", "What a heroic speech!" Analysis is either forgotten or reduced to ludicrous asides.

Politically Cliff finds the pre-1917 Trotsky particularly difficult to deal with. Following the 1903 split in the Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) Trotsky refused to side with Lenin and fight for a revolutionary combat party. Instead he occupied a centrist position, arguing for unity between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. To understand Trotsky's mistakes and to name the method behind them—centrism—is beyond this biographer.

Despite all the historical evidence, Cliff concludes, "Trotsky did not face a clear choice between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks." (Vol 1, p67)

Evidence against this is acutally provided by Cliff in a quote from the Menshevik Martov: "(Trotsky) has not only found himself in the camp of the liquidators, but he is compelled to take up their most pugnacious attitude towards Lenin". (quoted in Vol 1, p165)

The closest Cliff comes to a methodological explanation of Trotsky's early centrism is when he argues that, "Trotsky was always inclined to over-abstracting", and it was "this abstract view that motivated Trotsky's conciliation over many years." (p187) However, given that Cliff argues that Trotsky was always like this we are no nearer an explanation of Trotsky's opposition to Lenin in this period.

Cliff then shamelessly suggests that:

"The fact that Trotsky spent far more time with Zasulich and Martov than Lenin was probably an element in his taking their side, not Lenin's in the split". (Vol1 p33) The internal life of the SWP may operate on such a superficial basis, but it seems unlikely that these personal considerations entered into Lenin and Trotsky's world.

Cliffs political confusion is found again in other sections. In the chapters on the building of the Communist International (CI) Cliff manages to say nothing about the struggle against centrism—the 21 conditions, the splits in the SFIO and USPD, for example, which were used to create mass sections of the CI. Instead Cliff merely notes that between the first and second congresses (1919-1920) the CI "had transformed itself from a collection of small sects . . . into a *mass* organisation." (Vol2 p211)

The programmatic struggle which took place within the CI, the common forging of a revolutionary programme by discussion and debate, might as well not have taken place. For Cliff, all the ideas sprang from Trotsky and Lenin:

"The Congresses of the Comintern were schools of strategy and tactics, and at them Lenin and Trotsky played the part of teachers". (Vol 2, p217)



This is revolutionary politics rewritten by Enid Blyton. Lenin and Trotsky would have laughed Cliff out of court.

Finally there is little impression that Cliff has made any attempt to understand Trotsky the human being. In the small spaces between the serried ranks of quotations we learn little of what made this man tick—a fundamental task for any biographer. Key events in Trotsky's life are explained with all the psychological richness of a Gold Blend TV advert:

"In Paris he met Natalia Sedova and married her." (Vol1 p35) and

"After four and a half years of prison and exile Lev longed for a wider field of action than the Siberian colonies. So in summer 1902 he decided to escape". (Vol 1 p31)

These two volumes are not an auspicious beginning. And if his recent appraisal in Socialist Worker of Trotsky's whole career is symptomatic of what is to come the third volume will end up echoing Deutscher's theme of Trotsky the victim of tragedy. Cliff, in this curtain raiser, fails to even mention the organisation that Trotsky built in the 1930s, the Fourth International. What Trotsky himself described as his most important work doesn't merit a mention by Cliff.

Cliff scores over his two main competitors—Deutscher and Broue—only in the quotation stakes. In all else, he comes a poor third. His political incomprehension, coupled with the woodenness of his style makes for poor reading. For collectors only.■

All talk . . .

BY NICK STONE

SEX TALK is a 15-part series of late-night programmes exploring aspects of sexuality and sexual experience. According to the press release it "comprises intimate studio discussions" which "explore different aspects of sexual issues of young people as they make decisions about their lifestyle and attitudes". After the screening of part one it appears to be nothing of the sort.

The producers' notion of intimacy is to remove the studio audience and replace them with "erotic" statues. The panel sit around and wait for presenter Mark Chase to goad them into spilling the beans about some aspect of their sex lives. "Ever used a sex aid?" they are asked at one point. "Which do you prefer—vaginal or clitoral orgasm?"

Sex Talk is a liberal response to the impact of AIDS. It acknowledges the necessity of sexual awareness, but manages to de-politicise its subject in the process. Sex is regarded as something that takes place between two, or more, consenting adults, devoid of any social context. Intelligent, normal people sit around and discuss taboo subjects like masturbation in a new AIDS-era of sexual *glasnost*. Where Dr Ruth openly discusses the problems of sex, *Sex Talk* discusses its pleasures.

The programme included a documentary aspect, with descriptions of specialist issues such as the bondage scene or sex and disability. Perversely, all this actually resulted in a reinforcement of heterosexual sex as the norm by creating a voyeuristic atmosphere, an outside-looking-in perspective, that confirmed the panel's "normality" and treated the range of human sexual activity as a "little bit bizarre".

With lots of earnest young men talking about their teenage wanking competitions, the programme had the air of a liberal version of a seaside postcard. It was also incredibly dull. Quite honestly by the end of the programme, if they were discussing group sex with an inflatable camel you would be hard pushed to care less.

The Sex *Talk* series is worth watching because it gives an insight into the liberal, reformist view of social, and sexual, relations. If only we were all more open about sex then there would be no problems, no need for Dr Ruth and we could all have a lot more fun (safely of course).

But sex cannot be understood in isolation from wider aspects of social and economic relations within the family, in which oppressed women are sexually restricted—not just by the lack of openness and inadequate foreplay from male partners, but by everything they are brought up to believe about their role in life, by their economic dependency, by the exhaustion resulting from their full time job followed by hours of housework and child care.

Teenage sex cannot be understood just in terms of indiviudal choice, something which would be fine if only there were better sex education. It is also about gender stereotypes, about sexism, about the continued portrayal by society of "normal" heterosexual relationships and "deviant" homosexuality.

Individual sexual relations are fashioned by these societal values, the values of capitalism. Any programme which really sought to explore issues around sexuality in the 1990s would have to deal with class, gender, sexual orientation disability and ethnicity.

Sex Talk looks unlikely to confront any of these issues, and also fails to work as an interesting chat show. Let's hope the next 14 episodes are better, or they will send us all off to bed early.■

The Trotskyist Manifesto



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Against im aggression

Statement by the International Secretariat of the LRCI

THE HUGE US war machine has been put into operation against Iraq. The United Nations (UN) has been mobilised to give its sanction to a total blockade. An equally vast propaganda campaign has been launched by the mass media, bewailing the tragedy of the Kuwaiti people and the horrors facing the "western hostages". Saddam Hussein's lurid record as a dictator, as the perpetrator of poison gas attacks against the Kurds, as a latter day Hitler, are now suddenly given full media coverage.

The stinking hypocrisy of these sudden discoveries is obvious after a moment's thought. Britain, the USA and Japan have been arming and trading with this supposed monster for decades. The USA and Britain never sought serious UN sanctions against the South African or Israeli persecutors of the black majority or the Palestinians. UN resolutions on these peoples' brutal oppression gathered dust without a single gunboat being dispatched to enforce them.

The imperialist powers' concern for democracy, their opposition to dictators, is entirely determined by whether these "ideals" coincide with their economic and political vital interests. The interests involved here are naked—control of the Gulf oilfields and the need to keep the Arab states weak and divided economically, politically and militarily. The USA, supported closely by Thatcher, is willing to launch an all-out war to protect these interests. Workers and all anti-imperialist forces world-wide have a direct interest in seeing that they do not succeed.

The Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait was provoked by the mounting economic crisis wracking Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war. The Kuwaiti regime, along with the other Gulf Emirates and the Saudi monarchy, has consistently weakened the OPEC cartel through over-production to keep oil prices as low as possible, and therefore performed an important service for imperialism. In addition annexation of Kuwait liquidates at a stroke over a quarter of Iraq's foreign debt.

Iraq was also motivated by military-strategic and political reasons to believe that the seizure of Kuwait would enormously strengthen the Ba'athist regime. In strategic terms annexation would give Iraq secure access to the Gulf which the war with Iran had failed to gain it. Saddam hoped the humiliation of the Gulf emirs and the Saudi dynasty would invest him with the heroic mantle of a Nasser and revive a Pan-Arab nationalism centred on Iraq.

However, these aims do not constitute a genuine anti-imperialist struggle. The Iraqi regime is a brutal dictatorship which cruelly oppresses the Kurdish nation in the north, has bloodily suppressed the once powerful Iraqi workers' movement and the Iraqi Communist Party.

Despite a long term alliance in the 1960s and 70s with the Soviet bureaucracy and despite its bellicose verbiage against Zionism, Iraq has never been in the front line of Arab resistance to Israeli expansionism, and by its attack on Iran aimed to prove itself worthy of imperialist support as a replacement gendarme for the Shah. Throughout the eight year war imperialism distinctly favoured Iraq and economically bolstered it at key points to prevent an Iranian victory.

Iraq, even with the invasion of Kuwait, was not seeking a major conflict with imperialism. Rather through its annexation it wished to present the imperialists with a *fait accompli*. It wanted to prove itself to be the dominant regional power which imperialism would have to come to terms with and work through to achieve stability in the Gulf and ensure its continued exploitation of the area's vast oil reserves.

Like Galtieri over the Malvinas (Falklands), Saddam has under-

KUWAIT

Little, but not so poor

THE CITIZENS of Kuwait owe their territory to "a stroke of Sir Percy Cox's red pen" across a map of the Arabian Peninsula, as *Middle East International* put it.

At the time, in 1922, Sir Percy, British High Commissioner in Iraq, was primarily concerned with defining the borders of what became Saudi Arabia. He was not kept awake at night worrying about the "clumsily delimited" part of desert granted to the small coastal city of Kuwait. So it is all the more touching that George Bush and other imperialist leaders have suddenly become very concerned about the national rights of Kuwait.

The territory of Kuwait did not exist as a distinct entity before Sir Percy's pen got to work. It was part of the Wilayet of Basra within the Ottoman Empire. Kuwait city was primarily a pearl-diving and trading centre, ruled by the al-Sabah family which had been dominant in the area since 1752.

This coastal settlement had links with the agriculturalists of the oases and with nomadic bedouins in the area. The population, however, was neither sufficiently coherent, settled nor distinct from the rest of the Eastern Arabian peninsula to describe the people living in the area now called Kuwait a nation.

After the First World War the British and the French arbitrarily defined borders and created states out of this region. Their sole purpose was to create spheres of influence, access to markets, trade routes and sites for military bases. When oil was discovered in the 1930s this imperialist domination enabled the British, French and USA to exploit the new resources to the full.

When Britain granted Kuwait independence in 1961, Kuwait for the first time became a state with sovereign rights to negotiate with other states. Up to that point Britain, and before it the Turks, had controlled international relations and security in the area.

It was in 1961 too that Iraq first laid claim to the area, attempting to enforce that claim both through military force and by trying to block Kuwait's acceptance into the United Nations and the Arab League. The British saw off this Iraqi threat in 1963, with Kuwait paying $3 million to Iraq in return for the latter's recognition. The territory had not been disputed again until this year.

Kuwait, despite thirty years of independent statehood, has still no claim to be a separate nation with distinct cultural, linguistic, economic and geographical features. Kuwaitis speak Arabic, along with 100 million others in the Gulf and North Africa; there was and is nothing specifically "Kuwaiti" in its folk traditions; they are an amalgam of many nomadic or other Gulf tribal cultures. Until recently songs originating from the area were as popular in Baghdad as Kuwait; Gulf cultures were interchangeable and mixed.

Moreover, nations unify different class forces in the society. Classes, antagonistic at one level, are bound together by a common history and culture. But in Kuwait it is hard to find a Kuwaiti working class. Its population is two million. But only 650,000 are Kuwaiti and over 80% of the workers are non-Kuwaiti; in private industry (mainly oil) this reaches 98%. There are about 300,000 Palestinians, and up to 500,000 workers from South and South East Asia, including 150,000 maids to service the wealthy Kuwaiti families.

So when Iraq invaded Kuwait there were no national rights as such that were being attacked, however wrong the invasion was. That is why it would not be permissible to fight with the Kuwaiti army and ruling clique to defend "the fatherland" and its borders.

But Iraq itself has no justified claim to any territory in Kuwait, any more than Saudi Arabia would have. All of these states were falsely created. None of them had pre-existing boundaries.

Although Kuwait is not a unified and distinct nation, the people who live and work there should be the ones to decide its future. It is not for Saddam Hussein to take upon himself the role of the new Sir Percy, re-drawing borders to meet his economic and political needs. The people living in the area of Kuwait should be able to decide to which state they wish to belong; not just the Kuwaitis, but all those who live and work there.

The Kuwait which existed before Saddam's invasion was not a democracy within which the population could determine their own future. Following independence from Britain Kuwait developed a form of "democracy" more reminiscent of the city states of Ancient Greece than of any modern bourgeois democracy.

The ruling al-Sabah family now numbers about 1, 000 and heads a layer of about 60,000 men who are eligible to vote and who control the bulk of the economy. The ruling family's power derives from British control. They wanted powerful local agents who would support their colonial rule, and later continue to ensure stability for the interests of the imperialists once the colony was granted formal independence.

Kuwaiti citizenship, first class, was restricted to males over 21 who could prove that their families had roots in pre-1921 Kuwait. That means that less than 3% of the resident population were eligible to vote in the last elections. A proposal to grant equal suffrage to women Kuwaiti citizens was defeated in 1982. These women, like male Kuwaiti second class citizens, also have limited property and legal rights. Kuwait's migrant workers have no rights at all—the extensive free state health service and education system are not available to non-Kuwaitis.

The fact of the hideous inequalities and lack of democracy resulting from this system of rule does nothing to deter the support of the imperialists for such states. It is only when anther power operates, temporarily, against the imperialists and threatens their economic and military interests, as Iraq has done, that they suddenly find themselves the greatest defenders of national and democratic rights.■

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL

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Is there an Arab n

"Marxists hold that the Arab people as a whole constitute a nation, a nation in the process of unification. It is a nation artificially divided by imperialism."

At first sight this view, expressed here by *Socialist Outlook*, seems fairly obvious. Today over 100 million people speak the same language (Arabic) across 15 countries stretching from Morocco to the Gulf, from the Mediterranean to the Upper Nile. But in fact matters are more complex.

Asked "what is your nationality?" an Arab will answer "Egyptian", "Moroccan" etc. Nor are all Arabs of one religion. The Muslim world includes Turks, Persians and other non-Arabs, while some parts of the Arab world are not Muslim (eg parts of Lebanon). Indeed, the Arabs are not all of one racial origin.

The original Arabs were an ancient people of the Gulf peninsula. Quite different paths of development were taken by northern and southern Arabia. The latter was a settled civilisation with an important role in trade between Egypt, Africa and India.

In the north the desert was dotted with oases and crossed with caravan routes carrying long distance trade. It was the nomads and merchants of the north and west of the peninsula which welded the area into a state for the first time under Mohammed. Subsequently a vast Arab empire or Caliphate was established which reached its maximum extent in about 732AD.

The unitary Caliphate lasted scarcely a century before the North African and Spanish portions split away. By the mid-tenth century the Caliph was Persian, and a hundred years later a Turkish sultan ruled the Arab world.Over subsequent centuries the weakening of the mercantile basis of the empire at the hands of rising western capitalist countries led to its subdivision, backwardness and economic decline.

While the Arabic language and culture continued to spread, flourishing especially after the 12th century, an Arab nation with national consciousness (nationalism) did not come into being. This explains why the attacks upon the Caliphate—by Turks, Berbers, Mongols—in no case provoked a national or Arab uprising. Of course, nearly 300 years of a

perialist



estimated the imperialist powers' resistance to being despoiled of any of "their" possessions lest it encourage others to try similar actions. US imperialism must recover Kuwait. To fail to do so will be a tremendous demonstration of weakness that would fatally undermine its world policeman role.

For the USA this is nowhere more true than the Gulf. The USA alone is dependent for 50% of its oil imports on this region at a time when Iraq now commands more oil reserves than any other country in OPEC. If unchecked, by the end of the century Iraq will be more economically powerful and have an enhanced military capability. For imperialism and Israel *now* is the time to check Hussein's regional ambitions—by war if necessary.

What should the attitude of workers, revolutionary socialists and all genuine anti-imperialists be to Iraq's original invasion and annexation of Kuwait and to the imperialist forces gathering for an assault on Iraq?

Firstly revolutionaries should be opposed to the invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Forcible annexations, against the will of the population cannot be a basis for uniting the Arab and non-Arab peoples of the Middle East against imperialism. Rather such actions give imperialism a pretext to intervene and to gather support from other oppressed semi-colonial regimes for this intervention. Therefore, in Iraq revolutionaries should have opposed the invasion.

The main enemy of the Iraqi workers, the oppressed Kurdish minority etc, remained throughout this period the Saddam dictatorship. Revolutionary struggle against his regime should not have been retarded or halted out of any concern about a defeat of the Iraqi army in its "war" with the troops of the Emir of Kuwait, unlikely as this was.

If the Iraqi invasion was unjustified was it therefore justified for revolutionaries in Kuwait to "defend the fatherland" alongside the Emir's troops? No. Kuwait is not a nation but a Balkanised enclave cut out of the disintegrating Ottoman empire by British imperialism in 1921, when it was the League of Nations' mandatory power. It has never had the least shred of democracy. Its ruling class are rich and pampered rentiers, spending most of the year away from home in Western Europe.

The workers of Kuwait are predominantly Arab, Palestinian and other (South East Asian) "immigrants" with no rights whatsoever. Their inherent and objective interest was to overthrow the Emir not to defend him. Therefore, on both sides in this conflict the strictest revolutionary defeatism should have been maintained.

However, once the US troops were sent to Saudi the nature of the conflict changed its character. The adoption of an economic blockade accompanied by military skirmishes is a direct prelude to war. The build up of forces in Saudi Arabia has created the certainty that any Iraqi withdrawal would be followed immediately by a US/British occupation of Kuwait. The result for the Kuwaiti people at the level of democratic rights would be just as bad as the Iraqi dictatorship—witness the "democratic rights" that exist in Panama under US occupation.

But this occupation would have an even more reactionary consequence for the masses of the whole region. It would create a vast new military base for imperialism to "police" the whole region, enforcing "its interests" in the Iranian and Iraqi oilfields as well as those of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates. Therefore, revolutionaries must now subordinate the call for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops to the fight for the withdrawal of all imperialist troops from the Gulf area, and until all imperialist troops are withdrawn we no longer raise this demand.

Whilst it remains the duty of revolutionaries in Iraq to continue to struggle to overthrow Saddam Hussein they must combine this strategic objective with a readiness to defend Iraq against imperialist attack. This applies to revolutionaries in Kuwait. Any fighting here will have the character of being simply a part of a general conflict between a semi-colonial regime exploited and oppressed by imperialism and the mightiest imperialist army on earth.

Revolutionaries world-wide must not only oppose the blockade, the war preparations, but on the outbreak of hostilities must call clearly and unequivocally for the defeat of US and British imperialism and for the victory of the Iraqi forces. We must fight for working class and democratic forces worldwide to take class struggle actions against imperialism which aid the Iraqi resistance.

In Iraq "defencism" has to have a revolutionary character. Revolutionaries must mobilise the masses around genuine anti-imperialist, democratic and class slogans. If war with imperialism breaks out then for Iraqi revolutionaries insurrection against Saddam Hussein's regime must be subordinated to the tasks of defeating the imperialist onslaught.

However, a struggle to overthrow him may prove necessary to prevent surrender and defeat. In the event of a defeat for Saddam and his regime revolutionaries must seek to grasp the opportunity to overthrow the Ba'athist dictatorship and replace it with a genuine anti-imperialist workers' and peasants' government.

As long as Saddam Hussein poses as the anti-imperialist war-leader revolutionaries should demand the expropriation of all imperialist property in Iraq and Kuwait, the universal arming of the people, the granting of full democratic rights to the Iraqi and Kuwaiti masses including the withdrawal of all Iraqi troops from Kurdistan. We call on all workers everywhere to refuse to implement sanctions against Iraq.

- Break the blockade.
- Down with the imperialist war preparations
- All US, British and other imperialist troops out of the Gulf
- For the defeat of imperialist forces in any war and for the victory of Iraq
- Soldiers of the Arab League turn your guns on imperialism. For a revolutionary war against imperialism
- Down with the emirs and kings of the Arabian Peninsula—stooges and tools of imperialism
- Down with Saddam Hussein and the other Bonapartist regimes of the region
- For self-determination for all who live and work in Kuwait
- For a socialist united states of the Middle East

21 August 1990

THE GULF CRISIS

nation?

unified Arab state had enormous historical significance, especially for Arab nationalism, but it does not follow that it was actually an Arab nation state subsequently divided by imperialism.

The dialectic of development was that pre-imperialist domination could not produce the political cement for nationhood whereas imperialist domination integrated the Arab world into the global economy at the cost of Balkanisation and division.

The political slogan that expresses the goal of a Middle East united against imperialism and led by the workers and poor peasants is the socialist united states of the Middle East. Arab nation slogans, even where secular, contain reactionary and utopian features relative to the national minorities-Berbers, Israeli Jews, Kurds within Arab countries—and they cannot unite with overwhelmingly non-Arab states such as Iran.

A socialist united states of the Middle East would allow for separate states or autonomous regions for every nationality, overcome Balkanisation and be a real and lasting blow against imperialism.■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



Marxists and war

MANY PEOPLE new to Marxist politics think that the Marxist position on war is summed up by the words "revolutionary defeatism": wars between capitalist countries in the imperialist epoch must be predatory conflicts which the workers must have nothing to do with. Any defence of a capitalist fatherland must amount to "social patriotism", to a cessation of the class struggle and subordination of the proletariat to "its own" bourgeoisie. In reality, this is a hopeless vulgarisation of Lenin and Trotsky's position on war, closer to anarchism or pacifism than to revolutionary Marxism.

Lenin developed the revolutionary defeatist position in 1914 and applied it to imperialist countries engaged in war with one another. In these countries "defence of the fatherland" was a charade to cover up a national ruling class' war to divide the world in its favour.

Dominated

However, he never denied for one moment that there were "fatherlands"; that there existed countries dominated, exploited or occupied by the imperialist powers where such defence was justified—indeed desirable and necessary.

"We are not at all against 'defence of the fatherland' in general. You will never find that nonsense in a single resolution (or in any of my articles)."

Justified national wars against imperialism by one of its victims required different tactics than those presented for revolutionaries in inter-imperialist conflicts.

In the latter case revolutionary defeatism meant that defeat of ones' own country was a "lesser evil" for the proletariat than victory. Defeat of one's own country, if it comes as a result of unceasing class struggle against one's own rulers, was also a "lesser evil" than victory attained at the price of class peace.

The objective, immediate as well as strategic, remained the overthrow of "one's own" bourgeoisie no matter if this led to the loss of the war. However, losing the war was not itself the objective. The objective was the seizure of power; the main enemy throughout remained at home, that is, one's own ruling class.

The methods applied in this case were propaganda, irreconcilable opposition to the regime, and the class struggle, from the purely economic up to the highest political form—the armed uprising. Transformation of the war into civil war was a central goal.

But where a war takes place between an imperialist power on one side and a workers' state or a semi-colonial country on the other, or against an uprising in a colony, then the position taken by revolutionaries changes. In the imperialist country revolutionary defeatism's methods are transformed. Now defeat is not the "lesser evil" but becomes the direct and immediate task.

The proletariat must not only pursue its class struggle as stated above but must seek to obstruct by all means the successful prosecution of the war in order to help the (bourgeoisie's) "enemy" to victory.

In the semi-colonial country the proletariat does not abandon the class struggle but recognises that the main enemy is not at home (the semi-colonial bourgeoisie) but rather it is the imperialist bourgeoisie attacking its country. This tactic does not amount to "social patriotism", accepting a class truce or surrendering leadership to the bourgeoisie. Rudolf Klement, the first secretary of the Fourth International, in an article warmly endorsed by Trotsky, summed up what defencism meant in such circumstances.

"Here too, however, it [the proletariat] remains mindful of its irreconcilable class opposition to its 'own' bourgeoisie or its political opposition to the Soviet bureaucracy—and does not surrender without resistance any of its independent positions. As in the imperialist countries it strives with all its strength for the social revolution and the seizure of power, the establishment of its dictatorship, which, moreover, alone makes possible a sure and lasting victory over the imperialists. But in such cases, it cannot and does not, as in the imperialist camp, seek revolutionary victory at the cost of a military *defeat* but rather along the road of a military *victory* of his country."

But, some people object, what if the leadership of the semi-colonial country is in the hands of a brutal enemy of the proletariat, a Bonapartist or even a fascist dictator? Trotsky made clear in a number of cases the reasons why this could not alter the need for a defence of a semi-colony against imperialism.

During the Sino-Japanese War, which broke out in 1936, Trotsky refused to be swayed by the brutal record of Chiang:

"Chiang Kai Shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the independence of China. Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is probable. It is even inevitable. But today he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels and imbeciles can refuse to take part in that struggle."

Involvement

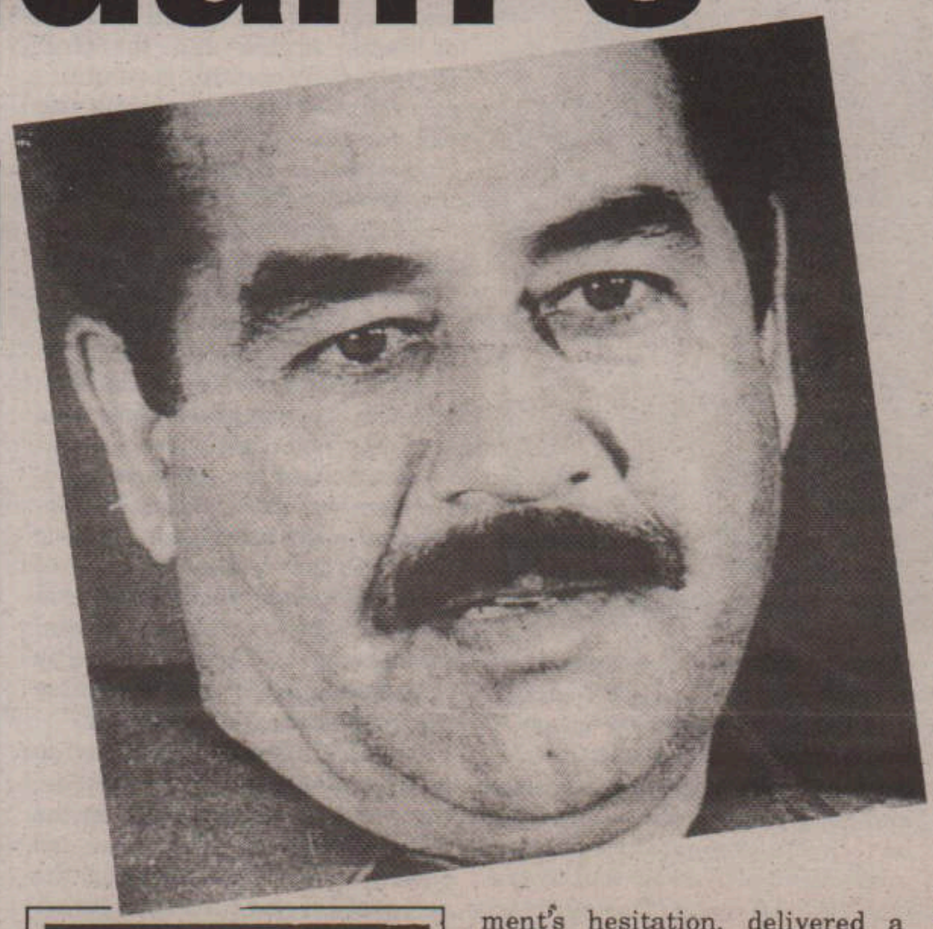
Trotsky points out that this active involvement in the defence of the oppressed nation is not the cessation of class struggle against the national bourgeoisie and its Bonapartist dictator but a political continuation of it by different means—those suited to a just war.

"To be able to replace [Chiang Kai Shek] it is necessary to gain influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the *military* struggle against the foreign invasion and in political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies and the internal betrayal. At a certain point, which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war like war generally is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle. It is necessary however, to know when and how to transform political opposition into armed insurrection."

It is these twin tactics of revolutionary defeatism in the imperialist country and defencism in Iraq that face revolutionaries today.■

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait is the latest in a series of desparate actions taken to try and shore up his rule. ***Arthur Merton*** *looks at the recent history of Iraq and its Ba'athist rulers.*

Saddam's Iraq



WHEN GEORGE Bush spoke of a line in the sand that Saddam Hussein must not cross he was probably too ignorant to realise the significance of his choice of image. For Iraq, Kuwait and many of the other countries in the region were created by Britain and France drawing arbitrary lines on the desert maps back in the early 1920s.

Before the first imperialist world war present day Iraq existed as three provinces of the Turkish Ottoman empire. After the war the British and French victors replaced the Turks and carved up the provinces of the Arabian Peninsula between them.

Iraq secured independence from Britain in 1932. Formal independence was granted but the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), an imperialist consortium, owned the oil industry. The British retained military bases throughout the country and the monarchy was installed and controlled by Whitehall. This ensured that Iraq was a semi-colony, its independence from imperialism wholly fictitious.

This subordination provoked resistance from the Iraqi masses, including from the powerful new labour movement. Repeated strikes were staged against the appalling economic conditions inflicted on the working class by the imperialist oil bosses and their Iraqi stooges. Support grew for the ideas of Pan-Arabist nationalism which sought to promote the political unity of all Arab peoples in one nation.

Nationalism

In 1954 in Iraq a specific form of Pan-Arabism, Ba'athism, was founded. One of its earliest recruits was a young man from the Takrit area, Saddam Hussein.

Ba'athism originated in the 1940s in Syria, based on the writings of Michel Aflaq. It was fiercely nationalist and Pan-Arabist, but its claimed socialist character was a fiction. It denounced Marxism and internationalism and espoused class harmony under the auspices of the Arab nation. Saddam Hussein later explained the status of workers under Ba'athist style socialism:

"Thus his [the worker's] class is secondary to his role as a citizen. As the role of the citizen is defined by his role in the struggle as a son of the people, the people will therefore define his rights and duties. As the socialist state is the state of the people, there can be no class conflict. It goes without saying that the relationship between the working class and the Ba'ath is equally harmonious, since the Ba'ath is the party of the toiling masses."

The implications of working class subordination to the interests of the nation became clear when the Ba'ath achieved power in Iraq in 1963 in a short-lived coalition. During their time in office the Ba'ath military wing, the National Guard, launched brutal pogroms against communists and workers. Thousands were slain.

By 1968 the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP) had regrouped and staged another coup. This "revolution" proved more successful than the 1963 affair and Ba'athism has remained in power ever since. Hussein was a member of the leadership, a key figure in the ruling Revolutionary Command Council and in charge of the Party Intelligence organisation, the secret police.

Hussein and his cohorts had learnt from their earlier failure to entrench a Ba'athist regime and in 1968 combined repression, particularly of communists and the Kurdish people, with promises of reform. In 1970 a deal was offered to the Kurds which would give them limited autonomy. In 1972 the entire oil industry was nationalised. Finally, in order to solidify their trading deals with the Soviet Union, persecution of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was halted and in 1973 the party joined the Ba'athists in a coalition government.

These concessions were designed to win support for the Ba'athists amongst the Iraqi masses. The durability of Hussein's regime is proof of the success of this strategy, but there were two factors that enabled it to work—oil, and the treachery of the ICP.

After the nationalisation of the oil industry Iraq experienced an economic boom which helped to stabilise the rule of the Ba'athists. After 1973 the increase in the price of oil brought in undreamt of wealth. In 1951 Iraq produced 8.4 million tonnes of oil. By 1979 production soared to 170.6 million tonnes bringing in an estimated $21.2 billion.

Meanwhile, Ba'athisation of society continued. People were forced to join the party or face prison. Every institution in society, including the unions, were restructured in accordance with Ba'athist ideology, which now meant subservience to the ruling party.

Ba'athisation was also forced through in Kurdistan, despite its formal limited autonomy. When this met with resistance Saddam cleared the way for a further war against the Kurds, this time in alliance with the Shah of Iran. Thousands of Kurds were killed or forcibly resettled and all the "rights" granted in 1970 were trampled upon.

Despite all of this the working class of Iraq did not rise against Ba'athism. They allowed Saddam to build up a huge repressive apparatus consisting of everything from street informers and block wardens right up to professional torturers and assassins. For this the Stalinist ICP must take the blame.

The ICP sat alongside the Ba'athists in government from 1973 to 1978, providing the regime with left cover and credibility within the working class. They justified this by referring to Ba'athism's supposed nationalism and anti-imperialism.

THE GULF CRISIS

The real reason, however, was that the USSR had found in Iraq a temporary ally in the Middle East and insisted that the ICP, in the time honoured fashion of Stalinism, subordinate the interests of the working class to the foreign policy needs of the Kremlin. The price paid for this treachery was that the ICP became the first victims of Saddam's change of policy when Iraq, needing to use its oil wealth to improve and develop its industries, turned towards the imperialist west. The west could provide technology, the USSR could not. It was only a matter of time before the needs of Iraqi capitalism asserted themselves. When they did Saddam, without a moment's hesitation, delivered a death blow to the ICP, executing its leaders and smashing its organisation in 1978.

For all of the anti-imperialist rhetoric of Ba'athism, the party should in no sense be thought of as a petit bourgeois nationalist organisation. It is a thoroughly bourgeois formation, tied by a thousand threads to capitalism and imperialism. Ba'athism sponsored the development of Iraqi capitalism on the basis of its oil revenues by bringing into being a whole layer of contractors, industrialists and middlemen. These people grew fabulously rich by plundering the country's oil revenues.

Nor has Saddam made any serious moves to break Iraq's semi-colonial dependence on imperialism. Even during the period of the friendship treaty with the USSR the Ba'athists attempted to attract imperialist investment.

By the late 1970s they were succeeding. Contracts to foreign companies rose from Iraqi Dinar (ID) 682.4 million worth in the 1970-1975 period to ID4077.2 million in 1980 as Iraq desperately sought to acquire technology from the west. Britain, the USA and, especially France, became more and more dominant in the Iraqi economy.

Saddam's long war with Iran began as an attempt to ingratiate himself with imperialism. Fearful of the instability caused by the Iranian Revolution and eager to show himself to be a pro-imperialist strongman in the region, he launched the invasion in 1980 with the expressed aim of restoring pro-Shah politicians to power in Tehran. In the course of the war he turned more and more to imperialism, securing vast arms deals with France, Italy, the USA and Britain. The US navy intervened, effectively on behalf of Iraq, against Iran during the last stages of the war.

By welcoming the imperialists in this way Saddam has ensured that Iraq has retained all the features of a semi-colony. Not only is it now burdened by a foreign debt that rose from $2.5 billion in 1980 to $80 billion by 1987, its attempts to diversify its industrial base have failed. Virtually all industry is still oil related. It is obliged to import most of its food.

The consequences of all this for the masses are dire. Despite all the oil money, despite the grand plans and the years of boom, especially in the construction industry, more than one third of a population of 14 million live in mud huts or tents with no sanitation or amenities.

In order to maintain his rule, Saddam has been obliged to transform the rule of the Ba'athist party into the rule of a single dictator, himself. To hold together a small capitalist class and preserve it from the wrath of the dispossessed, repression had to be carried into the party itself. Splits in the ranks, power struggles between factions, risked opening the door to revolt. After dealing with the ICP Saddam launched a massive purge within the ABSP in 1979.

All those outside of his immediate Takriti clique were slaughtered. Saddam declared himself a Field Marshal and took over the army, placed himself at the head of the state and every one of its significant national institutions. A cult of the personality, rivalling that of Stalin, was launched. Amongst other things posters proclaim Saddam as "The leader with a strategic mind and precise calculations".

The Iran-Iraq war, as well as opening the door to him becoming imperialism's gendarme, was Saddam's attempt to stabilise his Bonapartism by uniting the "Arab nation" against Persians.

Failure

The failure to achieve a decisive victory in that war undoubtedly weakened Saddam. It left him after the 1988 ceasefire with a chronic economic crisis resulting from a much reduced level of oil output. His foreign reserves collapsed from $35 billion to $2 billion, and Iraqi debts soared.

His immediate answer was yet more brutality. The chemical weapons that Britain's Ministry of Defence had enabled him to build were launched against the long suffering Kurds, killing thousands and destroying their land. Repression was stepped up, with the death penalty being introduced for anyone found guilty of publicly insulting Saddam.

Saddam's move into Kuwait is a desperate gamble to win back lost support through a military victory and by donning the mantle of Pan-Arabism. How long this gamble will enable Saddam to survive is a matter of conjecture. What is clear, though, is that to rid themselves of the Ba'athist dictatorship the working class need to be won away from all brands of Arab nationalism and Stalinism. They need to strike out on an independent course. Iraqi revolutionaries can help the masses find such a course only if they embrace the programme of Trotskyism and build a party based on that programme.■



Victims of Saddam's war against the "Persians"

EAST GERMANY

Crash course in capitalism

*The East German government in Berlin has finally agreed the date of surrender to the west: 3 October. But, as **Richard Brenner** explains, for East German workers reunification is no longer seen as the solution to all their problems.*

UNLIKE SADDAM Hussein, Chancellor Helmut Kohl did not have to use force to annex a neighbouring country. An exhausted and demoralised East German parliament (Volkskammer) simply agreed to split the difference between the Social Democratic (SPD) and Christian Democratic (CDU) parties' desired date for the abolition of their country.

The reason for the indecent haste of the Volkskammer parties is the state of near total collapse of the GDR's economy, induced by the 2 July restoration of the capitalist market.

Currency union and the lifting of the former state monopoly of foreign trade has led to a flood of western goods filling the shops, causing a collapse in demand for goods produced in the GDR. Meanwhile, the hopes of the Bonn regime that capital would pour into the East have been dashed. Fearing the confusing political uncertainties in the former Stalinist state, and aware of the chronic backwardness of East German plant, equipment and techniques of production, the self-interest of the West German capitalists discourages large-scale investment.

Despite all the pre-July hype over the capitalist wonders about to be visited upon the East, Bonn had massively underestimated what it would take to make the GDR a profitable prospect for capitalism. The CDU government of Helmut Kohl put aside DM24 billion for payments to keep companies afloat until the end of the year. It has all been spent. East German politicians now believe hundreds of billions of deutschmarks will be needed to do the job.

Strings

As always, the financiers and industrialists pulling the strings of reunification will try to pass the cost of capitalist economic crisis onto the working class. Having already suffered price rises of around 500%, every worker in the GDR faces the threat of immediate redundancy. Previous estimates were that a third of GDR businesses would have to be closed. But now West German Finance Ministry officials believe only a fifth may survive. Even efficient and previously stable enterprises like the huge Narva concern, which manufactures perfectly good lightbulbs, face bankruptcy through lack of suppliers and finance.

This means unemployment on a previously unimaginable scale, emphasising just how serious a defeat it was for the working class to allow capitalism back to East Germany. *Newsweek* magazine quotes a leaked memo from the GDR's Interior Ministry, estimating 60% unemployment by the end of the year. Little wonder that both seasoned Bonn officials and fledgling bourgeois politicians in Berlin are petrified at the prospect. Plans are already afoot to police the enormous protests that this will undoubtedly provoke, and some speak of the need to use the army should things get out of control.

Paying for reunification was always a headache for the West German Bundesbank. All are now agreed that it will be impossible to rebuild the GDR without affecting living standards in West Germany; whether by higher inflation, tax rises, social welfare cuts, lower wages, or—most likely—by all four at once. This carries with it a prospect that many German bosses fear deeply: that as well as causing widespread and intense social unrest in the east, reunification could undermine the social peace on which the West German state has based its success.

Overall, however, the bosses realise that it is too late to back down. As Karl Otto Pohl, head of the Bundesbank, has said, one cannot proclaim unity as a goal for forty years, only to finance it from loose change. It seems they are intent on stealing the workers' wallets instead! Former SPD Chancellor Helmut Schmidt is more direct. He warns West German workers that "considerable sacrifices" are necessary to carry reunification through.

Workers in the GDR are discovering what it can mean to make sacrifices at the behest of big business. In particular agricultural workers are seeing their entire livelihood undermined by the reintroduction of the market economy. The abrupt ending of the state monopoly of foreign trade has left the state collective farms (known as LPG's) vulnerable to competition from the west.

Chains

Huge supermarket chains have secured deals with shops in the GDR guaranteeing their rights as sole suppliers of agricultural produce. Those who thought that the wastefulness of bureaucratic planning would be replaced by an inherently rational market system have been disappointed. There is no such thing. Huge stockpiles of milk and perishable goods, together with acres of arable produce lying unharvested in the fields, exist alongside rocketing food prices.

The GDR workers are receiving their first lesson in capitalist values: capitalism worships at the altar of profit not need.

Unable to distribute their produce, the LPG's face complete collapse while their workers contemplate destitution. Little wonder that in early August over 50,000 agricultural workers from across the GDR descended on Berlin in an unprecedented demonstration of their anger and disillusionment. As one of the speakers told a crowd in Berlin's Alexanderplatz:

"We voted for rapid unification and for the social market system. We trusted the government to find a way. Now we see it was a tragic mistake."

Only hours later the Agricultural Minister, a Social-Democrat, whom the furious demonstrators had pelted with eggs and tomatoes, was sacked.

In general the working class, after forty years of Stalinist terror and mismanagement, still support reunification and a return to the market. But ever more sections are discovering the meaning of capitalism the hard way. Even the crisis in the Gulf is bringing home the bitter fruits of the market. The GDR was always dependent on imported oil and was facing serious problems before Hussein helped himself to Kuwait.

In January the USSR announced that it would no longer provide oil to Eastern Europe in direct exchange for products: the former satellites were forced to look to the world market for fuel and pay world market prices for it. This must be paid for from the precious hard currency earned through exports, and a huge proportion of export earnings was already earmarked for oil.

But the Gulf crisis has sent oil prices through the roof, and threatens to drive them still higher. Prices of $25 per barrel or over would swallow up more than half of the GDR's entire export earnings. It is a situation that could get far worse in the event of major hostilities.

It is not just the market that has lost its shine. Illusions in western-style parliamentarism—so prominent during the March elections—are being dented as the antics of the main political parties and the powerlessness of the government are displayed for all to see.

The horse-trading and manoeuvring of the CDU and SPD over the date of the elections and the route to unity has rightly appalled many in the GDR. But the economic crisis and the Volkskammer's cap-in-hand approach to West Germany has revealed to many that parliament is only a talking shop, completely powerless in the face of the real decision makers, such as the West German capitalist boss of Hertz who is taking the life and death decisions concerning the fate of thousands of GDR enterprises without reference to the GDR government.

The SPD are caught in a trap of their own making. Their aim is to build in the east a bourgeois workers' party—a capitalist party with links to and support from the working class—such as the SPD has in the west. But to win working class support, the SPD has to appear to oppose the worst privations of the restoration. That is why their ministers left the former GDR coalition government in protest at terms in the proposed reunification treaty which, they claimed, would leave the people of the east as "second class citizens".

At the same time, however, the SPD aims to prevent workers fighting back. The party wants to avoid being cast as opponents of rapid unity, an image that cost them dear in the GDR's elections this March.

Already support for the PDS—the old Stalinist party reconstituted around a social democratic programme and a rhetorical defence of the social gains of the GDR—has begun to grow among agricultural workers on the LPGs. It remains to be seen whether the reformist leader of the PDS—Gregor Gysi—will succeed in turning the PDS into a newly stabilised bourgeois-workers' party, or whether the ranks of the party will yield new tendencies prepared to take the road of militant struggle against capitalism.

Above all, what is needed is the organisation of a new party of the German working-class, capable of utilising the current intense crisis to direct action against the economic domination of the western capitalists and the Bundesbank. Against all factory closures, such a party would call for and lead the occupation of threatened enterprises; against the threat of cheap labour it would demand full parity of wages with West German workers and a sliding scale of wages to protect them from inflation.

Party

In the particular conditions of today, the new party would demand an end to the looting of the GDR and to the chaos of market distribution. It would call for the re-imposition of the state monopoly of foreign trade, not bureaucratically from above, but by the workers in the enterprises and LPG's seizing control of the farms, shops and transport systems. Workers in the GDR must organise direct distribution themselves. In order to avoid the absurd outcome of each plant, each farm competing with the other in the market, privatisation must be stopped dead in its tracks and a centralised plan re-established.

But instead of the corrupt and inefficient plan of the Stalinists, a centralised, democratic plan must be drawn up by elected and accountable councils of workers and farmers. Such direct workers' control would be a real alternative to the sham democracy of the Volkskammer and the Bundestag.

The German bourgeoisie realise just how serious the situation is. If the restoration of capitalism in the GDR involves massive upheaval it will be a bad advert for their system in the rest of Eastern Europe. It will strengthen the forces of bureaucratic inertia in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland. It will drive the workers of those countries to resist capitalist restoration. They will rightly feel that if Germany, with all its advantages, is staring chaos in the face, then their own prospects are bleak indeed.

The German workers must make it their great aim to display to their East European brothers and sister that there *is* an alternative to Stalinism and capitalism. This is workers' council power and democratic planning, and to win it a Trotskyist party is urgently required.

Without such a party the real threat exists of the growth of mass anti-communist, anti-capitalist, anti-western, but deeply nationalistic and chauvinistic sentiments and organisations. ■



Shedding jobs and illusions—workers on strike for unemployment pay

the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST TENDENCY

San Francisco protest against US troops in Gulf

THE REVOLUTIONARY Trotskyist Tendency (RTT) is a new group on the US left. In the first issue of its journal, *International Trotskyist*, it publishes a declaration of fraternal relations with the LRCI.

The comrades are participating in the Emergency Committee to Stop US War in the Middle East established in San Francisco. Other groups involved are the Bolshevik Tendency, Socialist Action, and the Revolutionary Workers League. The political basis of this united front against the war-mongering of George Bush was agreed as: "No war for big oil—bring the troops home!, US out of the Middle East and Saudi Arabia!", as well as the weak slogan, "Money for human need, not war!".

On this basis the Committee agreed to organise a demonstration in San Francisco against the US troop build up on 28 August.■

OUT NOW!

International Trotskyist



Journal of the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA)
Number 1 Summer 1990

ARTICLES INCLUDE

The history of the RTT, The death agony of Stalinism, The US working class today

Available from Workers Power, price £2-50

ARBEITERINNENSTANDPUNKT

Solidarity action in Vienna

ALTHOUGH NOT directly involved in the imperialist military forces in the Gulf Austria has given full support for the US and UN actions against Iraq. The ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt group (ASt) immediately launched an intitiative to unite the left in Vienna against the war threat.

As a result, on 24 August there was a meeting of thirty individuals and supporters of various left groups: the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Communist League (RKL), the Austrian section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the Initiative Against Racism, and the Solidarity Committee for Palestine were all represented.

They immediately planned a protest demonstration outside America House for 30 August and agreed to form a committee—United Action Against US Intervention—to co-ordinate the work. The committee agreed to build solidarity action around the slogans: Imperialist troops out; No NATO planes over Austrian air space; Against war preparations!■

GRUPPE ARBEITERMACHT

Trotskyist summer school in East Germany

MEMBERS AND sympathisers of the LRCI in Germany met in mid-August on the occasion of our first ever Berlin school. The meeting took place against a background of economic collapse and mounting discontent following the first ever restoration of capitalism in a former degenerate workers' state.

Lively discussions took place on the nature of socialism, distinct from its Stalinist and social democratic distortions, on the history and collapse of the Fourth International, and on the principles and application of the united front. On an immediate note, the school discussed how to intervene within struggles of the collective farmers (see page 11), and how to build the LRCI in what remains of the GDR and after reunification.

Overall the school was a clear success. In the context of the huge upheavals that are imminent, it brought forward the prospects for greatly expanding the German section of the LRCI and took a step forward in the re-constitution of Trotskyism in Germany.■

The LRCI
Arbeiter/Innenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)

Poder Obrero-OCIR (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section. The Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA) has fraternal relations with the LRCI.

LIBERIA

Ruined by imperialism

BY SUE BURNETT

LIBERIA'S BITTER civil war has devastated the economy and created vast human misery. A fifth of the country's 2.5 million people have been driven into exile. In the suburbs of Monrovia, daily life for thousands is dominated by the search for fresh water and food.

The civil war has become dominated by ethnic conflict. Troops loyal to President Samuel Doe, drawn mostly from the Krahn people, carried out appalling massacres earlier this year after the start of incursions by rebels organised in Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPLF). This gains its support from the Gio and Mano peoples, who have become the target of state attacks. Retribution is promised.

War

But ethnic hostility cannot explain why Liberia has plunged into this disastrous war. Racist tabloid jibes about inherent African tribalism are contemptible. The roots of the conflict lie in the policies of successive oppressive Liberian bourgeois governments, including the ten year old Doe regime, and in the exploitation of the country by imperialism. Together these forces have created a country with a desperately fragile economy, one unable to meet the needs of the majority of the people.

President Doe himself came to power as a result of an army coup in 1980. Until then the country had been ruled primarily by an elite drawn from the Amero-Liberian section of the population. Liberia was carved out of Africa in the mid-nineteenth century as a home for returning freed slaves from the USA. Its rich natural resources have been plundered by European and American imperialism and in the twentieth century, the needs of American capital in particular came to dominate.



Guerillas with captured government solider

For a period, Liberia became the "Firestone State". The Firestone rubber plantation remains the largest in the world, employing over 8,000 workers. Rubber and iron ore exports have been the mainstay of the economy and all other development subordinated to this extraction.

Successive Liberian governments acted for US interests. The post-war "open door" policy of President Tubman and his successor, Tolbert, ensured that foreign investment had a free hand. Liberia led the pro-western bloc of emerging African nations within the Organisation for African Unity (OAU). In return, Liberian governments received Washington's military, political and economic backing.

By the end of the 1970s, opposition to Tolbert's government posed a serious threat. Benefits from the economic expansion were reaching only a few. But the liberal opposition parties were slow to mobilise. Doe's coup reflected the impatience, amongst the army rank and file in particular, of those resenting the privileges of the Amero-Liberian elite.

Doe's Peoples Revolutionary Council (PRC) at first seemed intent on breaking the mould of the previous regimes. He declared his intention to broaden political power, to end corruption and repression and steer the country to a greater degree of independence from the USA.

But this project was shortlived. After a brief flirtation with Libya and Moscow, Doe returned to the US fold. Opposition parties were banned, workers' strikes broken up, the "radicals" in the PRC dismissed.

Doe staved off criticism abroad through a US style constitution adopted in 1984. But in reality his kitchen cabinet became narrower, corruption wider and repression more intense.

All this occurred against the background of a steadily worsening economy. Liberia suffered like all those countries heavily dependent on the export of a narrow range of commodities. US imperialism continued to bankroll Doe's government although Japanese and West German interests increasingly replaced the USA in investment and trade. But by 1988 the cold blasts of the IMF/World Bank's wind of change reached even this US protectorate. Liberia was dumped. A team of visiting US advisers left at the end of 1988 saying that nothing could be done to overcome the problems of the ailing economy, mismanagement and corruption. The World Bank and the IMF froze all aid. By March 1989 arrears had reached $550 million and the country was runnng a total debt of £1.7 billion. In July last year, the Liberian-Swedish-American Mining Company (LAMCO) shut down production throwing 15,000 out of work. Doe had no answer to the rising economic problems.

Once again the bourgeois and petit bourgeois opposition parties proved incapable of decisive action. Despite threats of "people power", demonstrations and strikes, the opposition procrastinated, trying to negotiate with Doe for elections. When Charles Taylor launched the rebellion in January it at first looked no more likely to topple the Doe government than any of the seven coup attempts of the last ten years. But Taylor was able to draw not only on resentment at Krahn domination of Doe's hierarchy but also on a wellspring of discontent with conditions in both town and country. This has continued to sustain both Taylor's fight and that of a rival leader, Prince Johnson.

The Doe government has little or no support. While US advisers were still with Doe's army at the beginning of the year they have long gone.

US marines ensured the evacuation of US diplomats and business representatives and offered Doe a Marcos style airlift, which he refused. Nigeria looked more likely to side with Doe but its presence in the peacekeeping force has been whittled down by the other West African governments.

None of the existing contenders for power are capable of resolving Liberia's crisis and no revolutionary can lend support for the struggle for power by either Taylor or Johnson. A military take over by Taylor's rebel army would lead to a further cycle of military repression, corruption and nepotism. Taylor himself was a party to Doe's government until driven into exile faced with charges of large scale corruption.

Rebel

Breakaway rebel leader Prince Johnson, now suing for peace with Doe, has actively sought imperialist intervention. The opposition parties under the umbrella of the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia (ACDL) have done little but deplore Taylor's rebellion and plead for peace and elections. The "socialist" Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) has lined up with this bourgeois opposition in the ACDL and has failed to call for any independent working class action.

Imperialism and the West African states will seek a political solution that puts some sort of interim coalition government in power with the promise of future elections.

All of this will be decided over the heads of the Liberian masses. Economic aid will be bought at the cost of a stringent IMF Structural Adjustment Programme with the necessary repressive measures to enforce it.

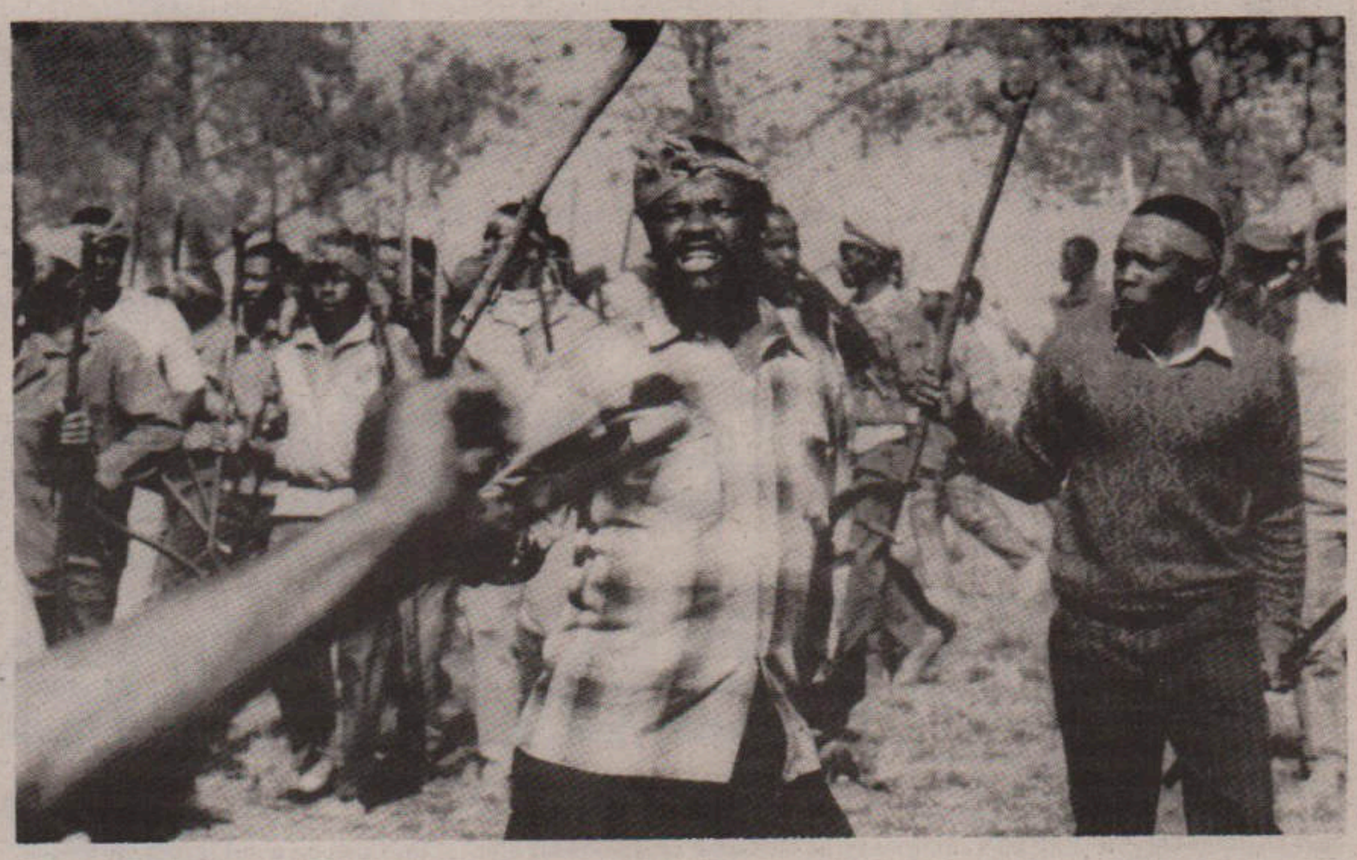
Chaos

Liberia's history reveals the callousness and hypocrisy of imperialism. It is more than willing to extract profits and raw materials when the going is good, and to back up repressive regimes that ensure this is possible. When the result of this exploitation bears its fruit of poverty, strife and corruption, the hypocrites in the western capitals blame the chaos on Africans, and offer help only on terms which increase dependence.

The only progressive outcome is for the Liberian working class, especially in the plantations, to strike out on an independent road. It needs to expropriate imperialist investments and break with the ethnic based attempts at a palace coup by forces whose only goal is to monopolise for themselves the spoils of exploitation.

A political solution would involve a Liberian workers' and peasant's government ending exploitation and guaranteeing equality before the state for all Liberia's peoples and national groups.■

Over 500 black workers have died in the latest bout of fighting between supporters of the ANC and those who follow Inkatha. The township battles have spread from the war in Natal province to the area around Johannesburg and elsewhere. ***Joan Mayer*** *here pinpoints the use of the divide and rule strategy by an apartheid state desperate to offset the pressure for revolutionary change in South Africa*



SOUTH AFRICA

Inkatha: servant of apartheid

THE RIGHT wing press, in South Africa and overseas, presents the clash between the ANC and supporters of Chief Buthelezi as an ethnic conflict. Reactionaries cite the violence as evidence that black workers cannot be expected to live in harmony with each other if they achieve majority rule.

But the apartheid regime itself is the real cause of the violence. Not only has it long fostered the divisions, but it has deliberately whipped up the current strife as a manoeuvre to strengthen its hand in the negotiations.

What is Inkatha?

Chief Buthelezi has only just launched it as a national party. Up until then it was a movement designed to tie the Zulu masses in Natal and the homeland, kwaZulu, to the leadership of Buthelezi. This aided the project of the apartheid regime whose "racial" categories and fake homelands were designed to encourage divisions between Zulu, Xhosa and other ethnic groups, divisions which were otherwise eroded by the formation of a modern urban working class.

Inkatha supporters run the civil service and police in kwaZulu. This mass base allowed Buthelezi to have a voice in the national political arena. He trod a careful path, avoiding the outright capitulation of other homeland leaders who accepted "independence", insisting that he would not enter formal talks until the ANC was unbanned and Mandela free, while at the same time enjoying the protection of Pretoria.

Inkatha was free to organise while others were in jail. Buthelezi was allowed to jet round the world opposing sanctions while Mandela and Sisulu languished on Robben Island. Inkatha and the apartheid regime thus developed a mutually beneficial relationship whereby Pretoria was able to point to a black leader with a real mass base who opposed the ANC's armed struggle and sanctions campaign.

Betrayal

This in itself was a betrayal of the interests of the South African masses. It allowed the apartheid state and its international backers to drive a wedge into the opposition. But the underside of Inkatha has been even more unpleasant. Linked to the state forces in kwaZulu, it received protection from both police and army in Natal and wherever it mobilised beyond.

It has been responsible for the terrible long standing violence in Pietermaritzburg, and other areas of Natal. Wherever working class organisations have sought to mobilise united, non-ethnic, independent opposition to apartheid, Inkatha has stood in the way. In the townships, it backed up reactionary gangsters—the "warlords"—organised in squatter camps, against community organisations loyal to the United Democratic Front/ANC. It sought everywhere to undermine workers' organisations.

In the last five years, union activists in the COSATU unions, have struggled to build single unions in each industry. They deliberately set out to ensure that Zulu workers, whether in Natal or in mines and industries elsewhere, were fully integrated into the common struggle. Buthelezi's response was to set up the scab union UWUSA. The majority of workers saw through this ploy and recognised the superiority of COSATU's organisation on the ground, but these advances were won at a terrible cost. Many rank and file leaders lost their lives, including some from the heroic union recognition battle at BTR Sarmcol.

Wherever the apartheid regime could, it fostered strife, especially using segregation in townships and hostels. In particular, Zulu migrant workers would be housed in hostels set apart from the settled township communities.

The police turned a blind eye to Inkatha supporters arming themselves, and the resentment of the local communities was matched in turn by the resentment of the hostel dwellers at the relative privilege of those with residency rights.

Inkatha was free to organise while others were in jail. Buthelezi was allowed to jet round the world opposing sanctions while Mandela and Sisulu languished on Robben Island

By the time of De Klerk's 2 February speech, which set the National Party government and the ANC on the road to a negotiated settlement, Inkatha's support looked to be waning, although it was still engaged in bloody repression in Natal.

After the long and bitter struggle to defeat Inkatha, young UDF activists in Natal were dismayed to hear Mandela's first advice to them—"throw your weapons into the sea". If obeyed this would have left the townships unprotected against the gangsters, Inkhata and the Natal/kwaZulu police. Besides this immediate threat, UDF and COSATU activists throughout the country felt that they had not struggled this far to see Buthelezi sit down at the negotiating table.

They rightly concluded that Inkhata would be used by De Klerk to force through a settlement short of one person one vote in a unitary state. Buthelezi's interests would lie in some sort of federal arrangement which would allow him complete power in Natal, or national power sharing on ethnic grounds.

It was hardly surprising then, that the younger and more radical ANC supporters in the youth league, SAYCO, passed a motion at their conference in the spring insisting that Mandela should not talk to Buthelezi.

What provoked the current outburst of violence?

All the signs point to a conflict deliberately engineered by the apartheid state in cahoots with Inkatha. Pretoria's dirty tricks merchants have been at it again. Leaflets planted in hostels in Soweto and other townships round Johannesburg, purporting to come from UDF/ANC organisations, threatened death to Zulu workers; they lyingly claimed that the ANC wanted to eradicate Zulu identity.

Incensed and fearful, the hostel workers attacked township dwellers. The township youth responded by demanding the disarming and removal of Inkatha supporters in the hostels. The South African police stood aside or actively supported Inkatha forces. There are many reports of police bussing Zulu hostel workers to their targets. It is in this context that hostels have been burnt and migrant workers expelled.

The government's reasons for fomenting this conflict now are straightforward. De Klerk needs to gather as many forces opposed to the ANC as possible to act as a counter pressure on the desires of the ANC rank and file for radical change. Since most of the homeland leaders have defected to Congress, De Klerk needs Inkatha to force the ANC's hand and allow Buthelezi into the talks.

The response of the ANC leadership reflects the differing pressures on them. On one hand they are committed to the negotiated settlement, and Mandela and others have indicated that there are many issues that would allow a compromise. They are anxious for social peace during the negotiations process and are keen to prevent the mass movement disrupting it.

On the other hand, they have to retain their mass base which is at present overwhelmingly committed to one person one vote in a unitary state, with no veto for any group, be it white or black. So although Walter Sisulu announced that Mandela will not talk to Buthelezi, the leadership is preparing a senior team to start exploratory peace talks with Inkhata.

What should the response of socialists and militants in the mass movement be?

Of course, the struggle against the reactionary Inkatha and apartheid's friend Buthelezi, must be maintained. But simply to demand instead that only the ANC leaders are involved in negotiations is no answer. The ANC leaders have made it clear that they are paving the way for a compromise with De Klerk and a settlement which maintains exploitation and inequality.

Socialists should oppose the negotiations outright and demand instead the convening of a sovereign constituent assembly to decide the fate of the nation. Independent workers' committees and a miltia are necessary not only to make that possible, but also to prosecute the class struggle and prepare to seize power from the capitalist class.

For this working class unity is vital. Workers have every interest in preventing communal violence. Militants need to unite around a programme of demands and activity which build working class unity and force the apartheid state onto the retreat.

Defence

Proper defence squads under the control of community organisations are vital to prevent Inkatha, or other gangs, destroying township areas. But the demands of migrant workers themselves must be addressed: the right of residence, the immediate abolition of the homeland system, a housebuilding programme, and the seizure and nationalisation of the land.

Trade union organisations which preserve unity in the factories and mines must also intervene in these community questions to prevent divisions in the class. With such methods, a new leadership can be built which puts to flight the reactionary Buthelezi, but can also prevent the betrayal being prepared by the ANC.■

In the 1980s many left groups turned towards the Labour Party as a major focus of their activity, believing that in this lay their best prospects for growth through various unity manoeuvres with the left reformists. The results of their centrist adaptations are now apparent. The "Trotskyists" who have sold Labour Briefing *now face the choice of dissolving into a still broader paper around the Socialist Movement. Supporters of* Socialist Organiser *are renouncing yet more of their "Leninist" past in their scramble to avoid expulsion from the Labour Party.*

Centrism's Labour pains

SUPPORTERS OF the fortnightly *Labour Briefing* are currently debating the continued existence of their paper. Launched in its present form as recently as 1986, *Briefing* aimed to build unity of the left in the Labour Party "in a democratic non-sectarian struggle for socialism".

Throughout its present life the paper was written and sold by supporters of the International Socialist Group (ISG), a group claiming to be Trotskyist. It also published regular contributions from reformist councillors and MPs including Jeremy Corbyn and Tony Benn.

Now the whole *Briefing* project has been thrown into crisis. A forum for the left that is considerably broader and larger than *Briefing* readers' groups, the Socialist Movement (SM), proposes to launch a paper of its own. So the ISG are now arguing to fellow *Briefing* supporters that they discontinue their paper and support the new one, along with SM members such as the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, and also some Greens, Welsh Nationalists and non-aligned Labour lefts.

Horror

Not surprisingly, quite a number of the ISG's left reformist fellow travellers have objected to the shutting down of *Briefing*. In many cases they argue against the new project expressly because, horror of horrors, it may involve people outside of the Labour Party. Yet in the course of expressing their disquiet two *Briefing* supporters wrote:

"What then would such a paper say at the time of a general election? Vote Labour or Green or Plaid or maybe not vote at all? Is this the basis for a coherent, attractive, feasible or useful paper for any of us?" (*Briefing* 104)

This argument starts to move away from the current false debate about the relative merits of a SM paper versus *Briefing*. It poses the real question at the heart of *Briefing's* crisis: the ideological and programmatic cohesion of its project.

The authors of the above objection are worried that any paper seeking to reflect the views of *all* currents within the SM would be paralysed: unable to adopt a clear position acceptable to its heterogeneous membership. The fact is, however, that *Briefing* itself was founded on a similar compromise. In order to hold its project together the ISG deliberately sought to create a programme for *Briefing* which was acceptable to both its own revolutionary-minded activists and their reformist allies. Two issues serve to illustrate this: the questions of the state and of the party.

Marxists argue that the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by the rule of workers' councils. Reformists believe the opposite: that socialism can be built through a Labour government legislating in Parliament. *Briefing's* programmme called on Labour "to take real power, basing itself on the democratic organisations of our class". This can be understood either as a call for revolution (which is not openly mentioned) or for peaceful democatisation of the state after a Labour general election victory.

Similarly, Marxists aim to build a new revolutionary party, politically and, when necessary, organisationally independent of Labour. Others would baulk at such a prospect. Again in order to find a formula acceptable to all, *Briefing* has echoed the evasive call of Tony Benn for the Labour Party to be "refounded", dodging the issue of the necessity to split revolutionaries away from reformists.

Alongside this systematic compromise on programme, *Briefing* has displayed the classic feature of all unprincipled combinations. The self-proclaimed "Marxists" of the ISG raise no thoroughgoing critique of the fundamental reformist errors and illusions of their allies in the constituencies, council chambers and Parliament.

This political non-aggression pact has not been able to stave off crisis indefinitely. Non-ISG *Briefing* supporters have for years been fed the notion, by the ISG, that *Briefing* is the organ by which the Labour left can be united. Now the ISG seek to move their opportunist project on to pastures new, re-applying their fiction of the "broad, non-sectarian" paper to the new SM organ.

Dispute

The dispute within *Briefing* assumes the form, not of a clear debate between revolution and reform, but of a squalid battle over the nature of an inherently ill-defined project and the apparatus of the paper. It becomes a dispute over quite how broad, quite how ill-defined, quite how much to liquidate revolutionary politics in the hope of finding a short-cut to building a new and stronger left wing organisation.

In 1986 *Workers Power* argued that "as a platform for principled regroupment of the hard left *Briefing* is evasive and inadequate". We were right on both counts.

A revolutionary organisation needs its own paper; a paper that fights clearly and unambiguously for workers' revolution and for all the tactics and demands in day-to-day struggle commensurate with that strategy.

Marxists

Of course non-members, militants and activists, even left MPs and councillors, can write in such a paper. But the Marxists must utilise this in order to mount a sustained critique of their reformist or centrist politics, with the purpose of winning them, or their supporters, away from their misguided politics towards the revolutionary programme. If this scares them off, tough.

As the sorry affair of *Briefing* shows, the clear exposition of revolutionary politics is infinitely more valuable for the left than the continual blurring of vital programmatic distinctions.■

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

ON THE basis of a concocted and glaringly inaccurate "report" from Joyce Gould, which *Socialist Organiser* (SO) was not even allowed to see, let alone reply to, Labour's National Executive banned the paper on 25 July.

As we made clear in our last issue, Workers Power condemns this flagrant attack on democracy within the Labour Party . Our organisation will fight shoulder to shoulder with the supporters of SO to reverse this ban and stop the leadership's witch-hunt.

The response of SO, and its editor, John O'Mahony, to the ban will not help build the struggle against the witch-hunt. The special four page supplement in SO on 19 July, sets out the basis on which they will fight this expulsion. It is a disgrace, riddled with political cowardice and unprincipled attacks on other papers that are also targets of the witch-hunters.

A substantial part of the supplement sets out to convince Joyce Gould and the NEC that SO is very different to the "Leninist sects" in the Labour Party and outside it. Clearly the purpose of this argument, despite its caveats about opposing the witch-hunt of *Militant*, is to convince the Labour bureaucracy that SO should be treated as "a special case". This is a scandalous response to a witch-hunt, which affects not only SO, but all left wingers in the Labour Party.

Litany

O'Mahony takes Joyce Gould to task for her ignorance of the left. We are treated to an extended litany of the crimes of these other organisations according to the gospel of O'Mahony:

"They are organised as tight single faction organisations. There is a predesignated leadership, and a narrowly defined set of ideas which function as shibboleths and are not open to discussion. Internal dissent is not allowed . . . There is also the spirit of these groups. It is the spirit of the narrow, persecuting religious sect . . . Such quasi-religious formations, *need* intolerance, *need* a 'party regime' that keeps an iron grip."

This rant against left groups is an undisguised attempt to smear others so that SO can save itself. Presumably if Workers Power fits this lurid picture of O'Mahony's then anybody who supports us inside the Labour Party is fit to be witch-hunted. This is the real logic of Mahony's attack. It won't help him build a united campaign to fight the ban. But then that isn't its real purpose. What he wants to do, by mimicking the language of the worst of the cold war warriors and enlarging upon their caricatures of Leninist groups as invariably being mini-dictatorships, is build a bridge to the right wing.

"Demonstrably", O'Mahony declares to his hoped for audience on the NEC, "*Socialist Organiser* is not of that type. Nobody who reads the paper could honestly make a case that we belong to that spectrum of politics". He goes on:

"In short, the attempt by the author of Joyce Gould's document to identify *Socialist Organiser* with the 'Leninist' cults shows simply that the author does not understand the nature of the thing he or she wants to denounce."

What a grovelling response to the Labour bureaucracy this is! Instead of defending genuine Leninism, O'Mahony begs for mercy whilst pointing out more suitable targets for Gould's wrath. If you think we're bad . . . look at the others!

SO proudly declares to these enemies of the working class its renunciation of democratic centralism, but at the same time claims to stand in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky! But Lenin and Trotsky both recognised the importance of democratic centralism in the building of any revolutionary organisation of the working class. Democratic centralism enables a party to be built on the basis of common action and clear political line in its intervention in the class struggle, while allowing complete freedom of democracy, of tendencies and factions, within the party. Only such democracy allows the members of a party to test out its politics in practice, in a united fashion, and to argue against, and correct, wrong positions as they become apparent.

Cowardly

The same cowardly method applies to O'Mahony's protestations about SO's politics. Look, he says to Gould and Kinnock, we are really good guys who agree with you on very important questions. Take the question of Zionism, for example. He goes out of his way to bring to the attention of the Labour leadership SO's latest slander of the anti-Zionist left—that they are in fact all anti-Semites.

In the twisted logic of SO, if you are against the Zionist state of Israel you display "a comprehensive political hostility for most Jews alive to day. Many neo-Trotskyists are infected with this specifically 'left wing' form of anti-Semitism".

This sleight of hand is only a rehash of what the Zionists have being saying for years about anyone who opposes the racist basis of the state of Israel. No doubt by becoming the willing foot-soldiers for Zionism within the left O'Mahony hopes to receive some support from the powerful Zionist lobby within the Labour party.

SO have now apparently given in to the witch-hunt, formally dissolving their organisation and calling for local branches to disband. This is a sign of the bankruptcy of SO's strategy, which requires them to stay in the Labour Party at all costs, in order, they believe, to one day transform it into an instrument capable of building socialism.

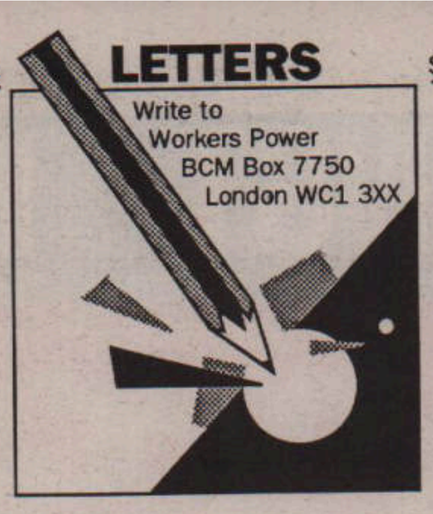
Kinnock

What SO fail to realise is that as the Kinnock leadership is striving to "prove" its credentials as future safe controllers of the bourgeois state it will expel all class struggle socialists whether they are self proclaimed "Leninists" or not. The criteria will be whether these groups start making ground in the Labour Party or create bad publicity.

The Labour Party as a whole can never be "transformed" into a revolutionary party as SO believe. Its bourgeois leadership will always prefer to split and even destroy the party rather than see it surrendered as a reliable instrument of bourgeois rule.

In the face of any witch-hunts from the labour lieutenants of capital, genuine communists counter-attack vigorously, denouncing the politics of *reformism*, not of Leninism. Rather than subordinate programme and principle for the sake of remaining in the Labour Party revolutionaries must subordinate all other issues to the task of winning as many workers as possible away from reformism and to the revolutionary programme.■

CSWEB split



Dear Comrades,

I welcome the decision by Workers Power to break with the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB). This campaign was never anything more than a platform for pro-capitalist radicals whom the dreadful rightward moving *Socialist Organiser* (SO) sought to cultivate. This was true even before the recent crisis and well before Workers Power decided to join CSWEB. I well recall a CSWEB Conference in Sheffield (late 1988) at which representatives of "Fighting Solidarnosc" were allowed to spout their pro-market programme unchallenged.

Workers Power should have known better than to give a left face to SO's shabby attempt to outbid the capitalists in terms of cash and typewriters for the hand of Yuri Butchenko. Marxists have something far more valuable to offer the workers—political ideas must reach the workers themselves.

Workers Power has spent the last year going to great lengths to debate with, work with and generally cuddle up to SO. A proposed day school in Sheffield on developments in Eastern Europe—originally to have been a joint effort by Workers Power and Marxists in the Sheffield Defence Campaign was rapidly converted into an appendage of the CSWEB conference.

I have to contrast this with the way Workers Power has boycotted the Hands Off Ireland! (HOI!) campaign, despite having principled agreement with HOI! and despite having done no other Irish work in the last year (aside from an anti-imperialist contingent on Time To Go—as a rival to HOI!—and a modest contingent at Bloody Sunday).

The only grounds for refusing to work with HOI! were that Workers Power did not like the way it was set up. With CSWEB it took an outright piece of scabbing by Butchenko (the logical step in view of his politics) and SO's failure to condemn him to prise Workers Power out of it.

I can only assume WP is desperate to recruit from the Labourite milieu around SO.

Yours fraternally,
Mike Martin
Sheffield Anti-Imperialist Action
(formerly Sheffield Defence Campaign)

We reply:

Comrade Martin is preaching abstentionism and sectarianism with regard to the emerging labour movements of the Eastern Bloc. CSWEB was, after the conference in autumn 1989, a democratic united front. Our participation in it was designed to push for links between rank and file workers east and west. For a period of time that is precisely what the campaign did. No other campaign existed. CSWEB, during that period, had not refused to condemn someone who had aided the scabs. In short it was the best possible vehicle for getting "political ideas" to the workers in the emerging labour movements.

Comrade Martin's approach reflects the passivity of much of the British left to these labour movements, a passivity—or at worst, like The Leninist, *a Stalinist hostility to them—that is opening the door to the scab right wing and the bosses influencing and shaping the political ideas of the workers. As compared to* The Leninist *front organisation HOI!, CSWEB was a democratic organisation with policy controlled by delegate meetings. HOI! was created by* The Leninist *and there was never any opportunity to turn it into anything else. This stemmed from* The Leninist's *refusal to participate with other organisations in a concerted effort to build an anti-imperialist contingent on the 1989 Time To Go demonstration. They wanted a front organisation and they got it. Thus far HOI! is one of those united fronts that comprises the policies, and by and large the members, of a single organisation, all operating with different hats on when they are in HOI! meetings. In other words it isn't, and has never been, a genuine or democratic united front.*

Finally, comrade Martin's description of our work on Ireland is wholly inaccurate. He should talk to some of our comrades who have been raising the issue of solidarity inside the labour movement, more often than not in the teeth of bureaucratic opposition. And no, we're not "cuddling up" to SO, though we certainly don't write off the millions of working class people who support Labour, if that is what the comrade means by the "Labourite milieu".

Israeli expansionism

Dear Comrades,

H Cohen's letter in your last issue revealed his complete confusion over Israel's current role in the Middle East.

It is true that Israel provides no refuge from anti-Semitism. But his suggestion that it can't take the strain of an influx of Jews from other countries is frankly bizarre.

Certainly Israel faces severe economic difficulties. But, in case Cohen hasn't noticed, the Zionists are still encouraging Jewish immigration, including massive numbers from the USSR. How will Israel cope? By continuing its policy of settlement and implantation of Arab land, on the West Bank and possibly further afield. Comrade Cohen seems to have overlooked Israeli expansionism.

Equally false is the assertion that "the Jewish lobby cannot indefinitely orientate American and European imperialism in favour of Israel". Was it ever the case that the allegiance of imperialism to its Zionist tool was simply determined by a "Jewish lobby"?

Certainly Zionists in the USA are well organised and vocal. But, as events in the Gulf show, the Arabist section of the US (and British) bourgeoisie, that seeks to rely on the Arab ruling classes in the region, is becoming increasingly isolated.

Irksome as the imperialists may have found Shamir's refusal to countenance a negotiated settlement, at this crucial moment the USA and Europe still rightly regard Israel as their best gendarme in the Middle East. Comrade Cohen has overlooked this too

Yours in comradeship,
Richard Brenner

workers power

Summer School success

IN EARLY August Workers Power held one of its most successful summer schools. Success was measured in the numbers attending and the new members recruited during and immediately after it.

It was also measured by the profoundly internationalist spirit of the school, reflected in the presence of comrades from the LRCI's affiliated sections as well as socialists from New Zealand, Bolivia and South Africa.

The school began the day before Saddam invaded Kuwait and the west was gripped by reactionary nationalist fervour. So the internationalist spirit pervading the school was inspiring as well as refreshing.

The school's two main themes were the political thought of Leon Trotsky and the roots and nature of the crisis of world Stalinism. Both, of course, are integrally related and a school dealing with such topics in a creative and thought provoking manner was a fitting tribute to Trotsky as the fiftieth anniversary of his death approached.

In addition to these two main themes there was also an Introduction to Trotsky's Marxism course for newer comrades. Practical problems in executing revolutionary activity, such a public speaking and writing for revolutionary papers were the subject of another course.

Next year the school will be bigger and better still. But in the meantime, watch out for details of our forthcoming weekend of debate, discussion and rallies, Permament Revolution '90 on 17-18 November. Being there could be your first step to attending Summer School '91.

Meetings this month

Cardiff:
Public Meeting
The Crisis in the Gulf
Tuesday 18 September 7.30pm
Hotel Diplomat

South London:
Public Meeting
The Crisis in the Gulf
Wednesday 12 September 7.30pm
Clapham Baths,
Clapham Manor Street, SW4
Near Clapham Common tube

Fighting Fund £24,930

THANKS THIS month to the readers and supporters who donated £4,577 to our fighting fund. This takes our total up to £24,930. Amongst other things we are now in a position to purchase a new laser printer which will speed up and improve the production of the paper. We received £2,000 from a supporter in Cardiff who had recently sold her house, supporters in Leicester (£114), and a supporter in South London (£400). We received another £2,000 from a comrade in Coventry. A group of our Birmingham comrades organised a quiz at our recent summer school and this netted £63. Thanks to all of these comrades and also to a supporter in Sheffield who donated £50 to our East European fighting fund, particularly vital to enable us to carry out our work in East Germany as it moves closer to reunification with the west.■

SUBSCRIBE!

Make sure you get your copy of Workers Power each month. Take out a subscription now. Other English language publications of the LRCI are available on subcription too.

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Class Struggle	£8 for 10 issues
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I would like to know more about the Workers Power Group and the LRCI

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:
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Name: .....
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.....
.....**Trade union** .....

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

STRIKE AGAINST THE POLL TAX

workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

- Scargill and the witch-hunt
- East German economic nightmare
- Oil workers' dispute

Beat the bailiffs!

FORM WORKERS' DEFENCE SQUADS

WANDSWORTH'S TORY Council sent the bailiffs onto Roehampton Estates on 20 August. They got far more than they bargained for.

Two hundred and fifty residents and activists were ready and waiting for them. Tooting Anti-Poll Tax Union, with support from Wandsworth Against the Poll Tax and the London Federation, had mobilised to confront the council's legalised thieves, physically if necessary.

As one Workers Power activist involved recounted:

"It was excellent. People turned up well prepared to see off any opposition, whether from the bailiffs themselves, or from the police. Teams had been organised in advance to protect flats that we knew were facing visits from the bailiffs. Close contact was kept between the teams . . . we had cars, CB radios, the lot. We chased the bailiffs right off the estate.

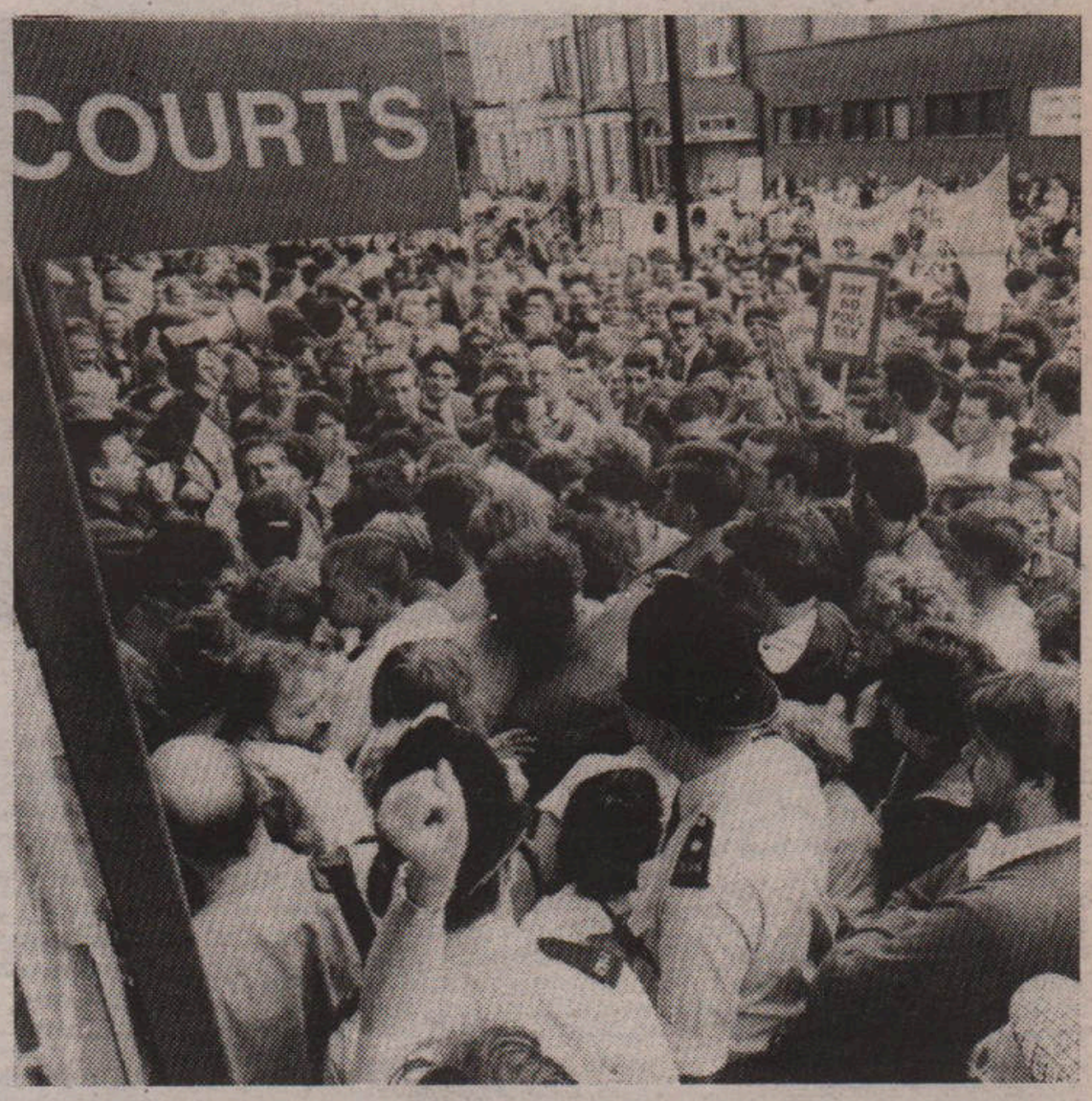
"Meanwhile about thirty of us took the battle to the bailiffs direct, occupying their offices in Kent. If they try coming back again we will be even better prepared."

With a quarter of the population not paying the Poll Tax, councils are stepping up their efforts to squeeze money out of non-payers any way they can.

More and more time in the courts is being earmarked for dealing with Poll Tax cases. Anti-working class magistrates are pushing through liability orders as fast as possible. Defendants are denied the right to representation by friends or anti-Poll Tax groups.

The number of cases of bailiffs being sent out will increase massively over the next months. That's why everybody should follow the example of Tooting APTU. On every estate, the first hint of a visit from bailiffs should be met by mass mobilisation, preparing to blockade flats and denying them access.

But it would be naïve to think that the police will not be used to protect the bailiffs. Specially trained defence squads should prepare to meet this challenge. Local APTUs should be setting up squads without delay. We cannot afford to leave the initiative with the courts. At this vital stage in the campaign, it would be suicide for APTUs to sit back and wait for the councils, whether Labour or Tory, to decide what method to use to enforce the tax. It would be sheer madness to rely on one-off stunts, marches and the like to deal a death blow to the Poll Tax. APTUs and local federations should waste no further time. They should become an army of agitators outside the factories, mines and offices calling for the one form of action that can force Thatcher to back down—strike action.■



UNITE AGAINST COUNCIL CUTS

LABOUR COUNCILS are busy proving what anti-Poll Tax campaigners have said all along: implementing the tax means vicious cuts in jobs and services.

In Lambeth, a new budget introduced after charge-capping will cut every service that the council provides, leading to forced redeployment of staff and redundancies this year. In Tyneside the council is proposing over 1,000 redundancies, targetting one in three jobs.

In Greenwich, workers remain locked in battle with the council. The four month long strike, over pay levels for staff required to collect the tax, has been met with victimisations and a clear attempt by the council to inflict a defeat on NALGO and so weaken it in other Labour authorities.

The Association of Labour Authorities realises that to keep Poll Tax bills down in time for next year's council elections it has to break union resistance to the cuts. The danger is that the Tories will be able to paint town hall unions as being the cause of high Poll Tax bills, and to claim that non-payers are the real reason for cuts.

These divide and rule tactics are the oldest trick in the book. Labour is already beginning to parrot these lies. There is a simple answer to this: the Poll Tax, not its victims, is the real cause of the cuts. The non-payment campaign and local government workers must link up to build united action against the tax itself. The best way to do this is for local federations and unions to delegate based councils of action. They must fight for strike action against the tax, with or without support from the union officials.■

MARCH DIVERSION

THE ALL Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation has organised the Peoples' March Against the Poll Tax as the latest phase in its campaign. The Federation describes the march as its "biggest initiative Yet". The 250,000 who took to the streets on the 31 March demonstration to Trafalgar Square have been conveniently forgotten.

Instead we have the prospect of three feeder marches from Glasgow, Liverpool and Swansea, with only 25 marchers each, meeting up in London for a festival on 20 October.

The march is a diversion from the real struggle to organise class-wide opposition to the latest round of attacks from the bosses' courts and the bailiffs.

In the absence of other initiatives London APTUs should use the demo as a focus for mobilising the APTUs. It would therefore be best if the march was as big as possible. But at a meeting of the London Federation on 8 July, delegates from Tooting ATPU demanded that the demonstration be opened up to allow more than 75 people to take part. The Federation's *Militant* leadership argued that this was logistically impossible and refused to agree.

All APTUs should hold meetings around the demo as it passes through their area, to fight for mass strike action against the tax and mass defence of workers' homes against the bailiffs.■