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NO SANCTIONS! BREAK THE BLOCKADE!

workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

PERMANENT REVOLUTION 90

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE ORGANISED BY WORKERS POWER

From Cold War to Gulf War

IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

See page 15 for details

Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

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The left and the war drive

IF THE Gulf conflict turns into a shooting war the lowest prediction is that 100,000 will be killed. These will not be the plastic soldiers of *Newsnight's* sandtray or the cartoon Arabs from the *Sun* and *Star*.

Real people will be subjected in their millions to the horrors of modern war. Poison gas, cluster bombs, B52 bombers laying down their mile wide "envelopes" in which nothing can survive—all this will be unleashed on soldiers and civilians alike.

And for what?

To defend Kuwait against Iraq's aggression, free the hostages, enforce the UN sanctions and protect Saudi Arabia from invasion, runs the official line of the USA.

This is one big lie that nobody should swallow. "If they grew carrots out there, we wouldn't give a damn" said one White House politician.

The USA is leading the biggest build up of military force since Vietnam for one reason only: to decisively assert imperialism's right to exploit the resources of the world. In this case they want to defend their access to cheap oil.

Britain and the USA are prepared to spend millions of dollars a day and unleash the latest, high tech military hardware to keep the Middle East as a backwater of poverty and underdevelopment which they can control.

As for protecting Saudi Arabia, it is already occupied—by several hundred thousand western and Arab troops.

The politicians and their media puppets repeatedly call this gigantic military alliance "the camp of freedom" or "the democratic allies".

What cynical liars! Just look at Britain's allies. The Saudi, Syrian, Iranian and Kuwaiti governments—not one of them elected, not one of them prepared to give their populations the most elementary of democratic rights.

Turkey—where a sham democracy hides the daily brutality of the military and secret police. Israel—which systematically denies the basic human rights of the Palestinians and has occupied the West Bank and Gaza since 1973.

No worker has any interest in supporting Bush and Thatcher's war drive. And despite the barrage of propaganda it is clear that only a minority share the gung-ho "We will nuke you" line of the gutter press. Yet when the killing begins many will shrug their shoulders and say: "its inevitable".

It is not inevitable. It can be stopped.

Mass working class protest and action by workers around the world can stop it. But to do so workers must be clear that it is necessary to remove the root cause of the conflicts in the Middle East. The problems of the region are not the result of one dictator or religious fanatic. They are caused by imperialism, foreign military intervention and super-exploitation.

Saddam's annexation of Kuwait was one injustice amongst the many daily injustices of life in the Middle East. But the biggest injustice is imperialism, which ensures that the region richest in the world's most vital resource remains one of the poorest and underdeveloped. Imperialism, which cries crocodile tears over the rights of the Kurds and Palestinians, but arms and bankrolls those who systematically butcher them.

The troops, planes, tanks and ships are there to defend that big injustice not to right the small one. At present the world's politicians are maintaining the pretence of "giving sanctions time to work".

But sanctions are not there to prevent a war. They are there as the pretext for a military build up, and when that military build up is complete the killing machine can be thrust into gear.

The only way to stop the war is to break the sanctions, end the blockade and force Thatcher, Bush and co to pull the troops out now.■

● When the shooting starts? Turn to page 3



"not beaten, not tortured"

Free the Birmingham Six

SIXTEEN YEARS after they were originally convicted the Birmingham Six have again had their convictions referred back to the Court of Appeal. The referral came because the Devon and Cornwall police inquiry found discrepancies in interview notes of one of the Six, Richard McIlkenny.

This cast doubt on the safety of the convictions; according to Home Secretary David Waddington. The discrepancies were discovered using a technique called electrostatic document analysis (ESDA). This showed that the record of an interview with McIlkenny was not made at the time of interview, as claimed at the trial of the Six in 1975. According to Birmingham Six lawyer, Ivan Giffen, all the details of the ESDA tests and the materials necessary to conduct them were kept from the defence lawyers for seven years. It is a miracle that it was used at all. Home Office inaction allowed the West Midlands police to destroy 2,000 original trial documents and keep only photocopies, on which ESDA tests cannot be run.

Since the announcement of the reopening of the case, media attention has focused on the activities of former Detective Superintendent George Reade. It was Reade who was responsible for a crude attempt to synchronise the fabricated timings of interviews of the Six. Reade gave Devon and Cornwall officers investigating the case three different explanations for the inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the documents which were meant to be a true record of the police interviews.But behind one cop stands the ruling class' judicial system. The history of the Birmingham Six case is one of a conspiracy by the British establishment to jail six Irish men in full knowledge of their innocence.

The original convictions of the Six rested on the forensic evidence of Dr Frank Skuse, subsequently retired on the grounds of limited efficiency, and a series of confessions extracted under torture.

The trial judge, Bridge, said at the time that to admit the confessions were beaten out of the Six would be to show the police as "masters of the vile techniques of cruelty and brutality to suspects". Subsequent revelations have proved this to be the case.

The first appeal was heard in 1976 by the then Lord Chief Justice, Lord Widgery. He considered that the forensic evidence was inconclusive but was "not a point of great importance in the case"! Of the beatings of the Six, Widgery believed that this was not "beyond the ordinary".

Lord Denning presided over the appeal court hearing in 1980. He refused to consider the possibility of the innocence of the Six:

"If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous. This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: it cannot be right these actions should go any further."

The Birmingham Six appealed to the House of Lords against Denning's verdict. In 1981, to no one's surprise, the Lords found against them.

In November 1986, an ex-police officer who was present during the interrogation of the Six came forward to support their claim that they had been tortured. In January 1987 the case was referred back to the court of appeal. Two ex-prison warders and a police station cleaner corroborated the fact that the Six had been tortured in police custody. Despite this, the presiding judge, Lord Lane, declared that "the longer the hearing has gone on, the more convinced the court has become that the verdict of the jury was correct".

It is not simply the credibility of men such as Lord Lane which is exposed by the case of the Birmingham Six, but the whole system of justice over which they preside. The conspiracy against the Birmingham Six, carried on now for 16 years, is proof that the judicial system reflects the interests of the British ruling class. That class has declared war on the struggle for Irish self-determination, and the Bimingham Six are casualties of that war.

Only when British workers act to end that war by forcing the British troops out can we ensure there will be no more cases like that of the Birmingham Six.■

Gay bashing: police no answer

IN THE early hours of 29 April actor Michael Boothe was stamped to death by a gang of "queer bashers" who left him lying in his own blood outside a public toilet in Ealing, West London. A police spokesperson described the assault as an "extraordinary severe beating of a merciless and savage nature". One of his feet was half severed from his leg. Months earlier 61 year old William Dalziel was killed by seven or eight blows to the head from a piece of wood, no more than three miles from the scene of Boothe's murder. In July a young gay man was found on Clapham Common with injuries so severe that his head had swollen to three times its normal size.

According to the Gay London Policing Group (GALOP) a gang of youths have carried out a spate of attacks on the Common since July, including beatings, clubbings and stonings.

On 31 August a gay man was found floating face-down in a West London canal. GALOP reports that twenty gay men were murdered during the last two years, of whom eleven were victims of "queer bashers".

Direct violent assault is only one aspect of the physical oppression oof the lesbian and gay community. Arrests for public decency offences rose from 1500 to 2000 in 1989.

Last year the Ealing police force staked out local toilets in an operation involving horse patrols and a helicopter. Weeks before the Southall murder Southall police arrested more than thirty gay men on public decency charges, the traditional way in which gay sex in public parks and tiolets is criminalised. A spokesperson for the Ealing Gay Association said:

"It is now more than one hundred days since Michael Boothe was kicked to death in Ealing and his murder remains unsolved. And yet the police seem to have unlimited resources to spend rounding up 'gay sunbathers'.

Home Office minister, John Patten, meanwhile declared that the new Criminal Justice Bill would be used as a weapon against gay men; his proposals for prison sentences for "repeat sexual offenders" carry a menacing ring in the light of the 36% rise in the number of men arrested on "gross indecency charges".

The response from the lesbian and gay community has been militant but confused. The direct action group OutRage demonstrated outside New Scotland Yard and held a defiant "kiss-in" at Piccadilly Circus. Over 500 people marched through Ealing to demand an end to anti-gay violence. But the political strategy advanced to acheive this has led the fightback down a dangerous road. OutRage has launched a campaign to force the police to monitor statistics, and introduce genuine liaison and equal opportunities. Senior Met officers have already met with representatives of the Gay Business Association and GALOP.

The police have already made clear where they stand. The ongoing crackdown on cottaging should be proof enough. Most gay men are not "out". They don't have public gay relationaships and have no choice but to rely on the "cottage" (public toilet) for sexual encounters. Calls for more police monitoring are ultimately a sanction for more police surveillance and assaults on gay men. There are over seventy laws on the statute book which discriminate against gay men. The police are the main agency for their implementation. It might suit the interests of gay businessmen to call for greater police liaison, but for working class lesbians and gay men it is the signal for further repression.

The Ealing demonstration showed the potential for a fighting alternative. Along with many lesbian and gay groups on the march there were also a number of trade unions and a group from the Sekhon Family Support Group, representing a black man killed earlier in the year.

What is necessary is the forging of lesbian and gay self-defence groups and turning that trade union/black community support into the formation of workers' defence squads to drive the bigots, and their allies in the police, off the streets.■

Gay rights in prison

"IN PRISON, gay men are punished twice; first for their crime and then for their sexual orientation" says Marcus Hellewell of the newly formed Gay Rights in Prison (GRIP).

When a gay man enters prison he will be required to submit to a voluntary HIV test. But as one prisoner wrote to GRIP:

"I was told by the doctor: if you agree to the test you will be put in a single cell bang-up until your results come back. If negative you will be allowed a cell mate; if positive you will go into a cell with another who has a positive result. I refused at first; that's when I was told I could forget being transferred from here. So I had the test."

And this is no isolated incident. It is the norm for gay men in prison to be threatened with solitary confinement to force them to take an HIV test.

But despite Home Office "concern" over HIV the most effective way of preventing its spread behind bars is still denied.

Gay sex is illegal in the prison system. So condoms are denied to sexually active men in prison. As GRIP explains:

"Since there is no sex in prisons it is unnecessary that there should be safe sex. While the Home Office quibbles, the virus spreads".

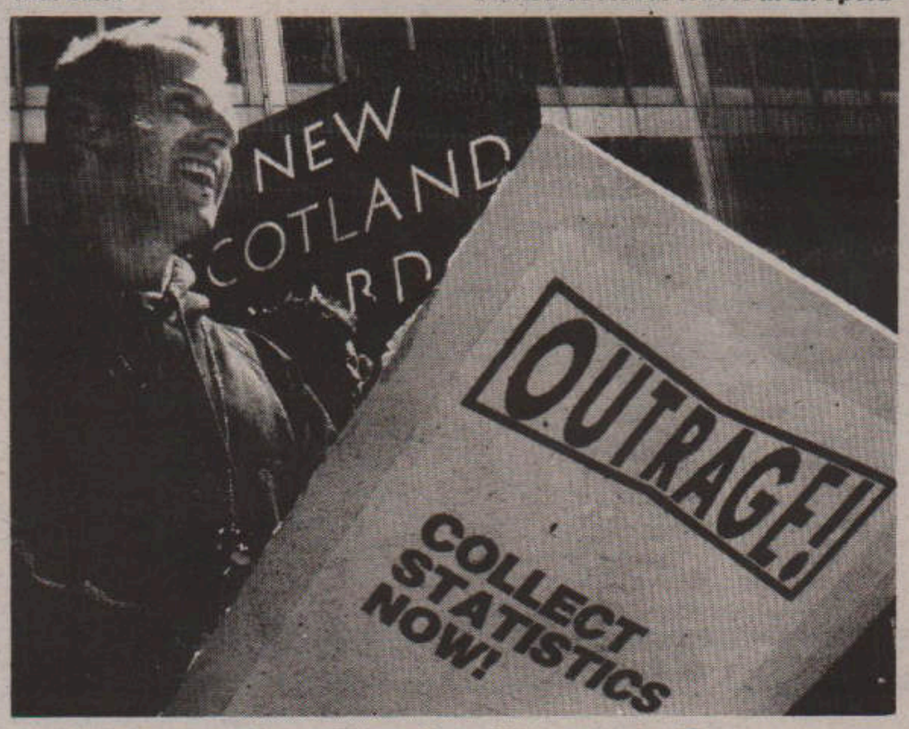
Gay relationships which are established in prison become the target of official harassment, with partners quickly moved to different institutions.

Open prisons, which allow greater freedom to low category prisoners, are refusing to accept gay inmates. When asked why a Home Office press official suggested:

"I rather imagine it's because of the risk of HIV . . . and because other inmates may not appreciate having to listen to homosexual lovemaking"

GRIP is committed to fighting against such discrimination and bigotry and offers support to gay prisoners, family and friends.■

Contact: GRIP c/o 69 Cowcross Street, London EC1



Self defence not police collaboration will stop gay bashing

"Happy families"

TORY POLITICIANS are so committed to the family that many of them have two.

Here lies Thatcher's problem in trying to play the family card in the run up to her fourth general election. The harsh reality is that the advertisers' dream family is in decline.

Almost 40% of marriages in England and Wales will ultimately end in divorce, according to the latest official population survey, while 24% of children will have experienced the divorce of their parents by the time they are 16. Average family size is shrinking. Over 25% of children are born outside marriage (although over half of these are registered by parents who live together).

Meanwhile the proportion of women working has continued to rise through the last decade. Women make up 44% of the workforce. The current shortfall of school leavers has increased the demand for women workers.

Even the most right wing of social planners and Conservative strategists cannot come up with practical plans to turn the clock back to the days of 2.4 children and Katy with the OXO cubes.

The right wing has, however, picked out its targets. The recent Centre for Policy Studies recently suggested that local authorities stop housing single mothers because it encourages pregnancies!

There is still talk, at the level of the Law Commission, of reforms to make divorce harder. More immediate is Thatcher's proposal to chase disappearing fathers through the courts to enforce maintenance and stoppages of earnings.

These proposals will end up hitting young working class parents, especially mothers. All such measures increase women's dependence. Despite the miseries of modern family breakdown we should be under no illusion about a return to the days when families had to stay together because of economic necessity. There are still thousands of women trapped in prison-house families because they can't afford to leave.

The Tory pretence of concern for women aside, their policies will bring no relief to women or families.

Thatcher has frozen child benefit and drastically cut municipal housing programmes. "The party of the family"? Tell that to the thousands of families living in cramped hostels and bed and breakfast accomodation because of the lack of homes!■

THE GULF CRISIS

Why we will defend Iraq

WHETHER OR not a shooting war starts in the next month one thing is sure. If and when war does erupt there will be few friends for Iraq around the world.

So solid is the imperialist and Stalinist alliance that hardly a column inch or TV second is devoted to the question of whether US intervention and the threat of war is justified.

Instead we get propaganda, day in day out, aimed at reinforcing hostility to Iraq and preparing us for war: twenty reasons to hate Saddam—from causing inflation to closing children's wards at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

As a result most workers will react with horror to the Marxist position; that they should actively *support* Iraq when war breaks out, that they should defend it now against the imperialist sanctions and blockade.

How can you defend Iraq when Saddam is a brutal right wing dictator? What about Kuwait—don't small countries deserve protection from expansionist bullies? These are the questions which even committed socialists and anti-imperialists will throw back at the revolutionary left.

Though many workers hate the idea of a bloody war in the Gulf they believe in the end there is no other option. Our class is not spontaneously pacifist like the middle class liberals who run CND. If there is injustice and oppression workers will sanction the use of force to put it right where all else fails.

Revolutionary Marxists are not pacifists either. We believe that most of the injustice and oppression in the world can only be put right through necessarily violent struggle. And that struggle includes the fight against Saddam's oppression of the Kurds, his brutal dictatorship over the Iraqi workers, his annexation of Kuwait.

But there is an even bigger force for oppression and injustice in the Middle East: USA, Britain and France who today are busy strengthening their armies to reinforce the system of injustice called imperialism. Imperialism is the cause of Kurdish oppression, the cause of the lack of democracy in every Middle eastern state.

A victory for the imperialist armies may cheapen the price of the petrol in your car. But it will put your boss and the bosses' politicians in an even better position to attack you: your wages, your services, your democratic rights.

Whilst the war is on they will call for workers to declare truce in the class struggle, and particularly in the war-related industries—the shipyards, the weapons factories and the merchant navy. But the bosses will not stop the class offensive. They won't suspend the Poll Tax, the NHS cuts, the drive to keep wages below inflation. They will seize the chance to attack the working class with both hands.

A victory for the imperialist armies may kick the Iraqi army out of Kuwait and topple Saddam Hussein. But what will they replace him with? An unelected monarchy in Kuwait and another unelected Colonel or dictator in Iraq, this time more trustworthy than their former friend and ally.

And it will leave the USA with a permanent base in the region—a pro-imperialist alliance and a string of military installations poised to crush any popular revolt the moment it starts.

But a victory for Iraq will utterly disorganise the imperialists, including the British bosses. It will signal to the workers and peasants not just in the Gulf but throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America that the world's biggest bully, the USA, can be beaten. It will signal to the starving in every continent that the imperialist system which causes hunger, poverty and disease need not be tolerated in silence.

That is why genuine internationalist workers must side with Iraq, despite its reactionary government. There is no need to parade with posters of the smiling Iraqi dictator, or to give his government one iota of political support to be on the right side in the coming war. The British workers movement is the only force in this country which has fought consistently for solidarity with the Kurds, for solidarity with the Iraqi workers against

EDITORIAL



Saddam whilst his generals and torturers were feted in the consulates of Europe.

We must organise now to stop the war by stopping Britain's war machine. Workers have the power to stop supplies to the Gulf task force. We have the numbers which, if mobilised on the streets, have the power to make Thatcher and Kinnock think again before they pull the trigger.

Thatcher calls the organised working class "the enemy within". After she smashed Galtieri she turned to smashing the miners, the printers and seafarers. If she crushes Saddam she will turn round to crush resistance to the Poll Tax, low pay and rising unemployment.

That's why she must be stopped, in Britain and the Gulf!■

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Fighting Poll Tax cuts

LIVERPOOL

ONE HUNDRED and thirty-three Poll Tax and environmental health workers are on strike in a fight to force Liverpool City Council to respect national union agreements. When town hall workers and NALGO members mobilised for a half day official strike in solidarity the Labour Council went running to court in a bid to use the Tory anti-union laws against them, claiming that the strike was called by NALGO branch officers, not through a ballot.

Councillors did not hesitate to invoke the new penal clause which allows stewards to be jailed or have their homes siezed to pay fines. Judy Cotter, secretary of the 5,000 strong NALGO branch, was phoned and told she would face jail unless she called off the action.

A letter banning the action was handed out to every council worker as they arrived on the morning of the strike. NALGO officials were warned that the union could be fined £250,000 if the strike went ahead.

Deputy leader of the Council, Alan Dean, announced:

"This is about who runs the city—the elected council or the NALGO branch executive."

Dean had the shock of his life when over 5,000 town hall workers walked out in defiance.

Every housing office and social service office, every library and children's home was closed. When the council met, 1,000 NALGO strikers, council tenants, Poll Tax unions and the Black Caucus demonstrated outside. local officials of the council unions said they would call for a mass walkout the moment the council attempts to penalise anyone for breaking the court injunction.

Recently the council railroaded through a £4-a-week rent rise as part of an attempt to reduce its £3.6 million budget deficit. With 51% of the Poll Tax unpaid the council intends to make Liverpool workers pay for its failure to fight Thatcher.

The fighting spirit shown by defying the anti-union laws provides a great platform from which to launch a fight for all-out strike action against the cuts and the Poll Tax itself, backed up by occupations against closures.

Such a campaign must draw in tenants, parents, youth and black workers. It must be placed under the control of rank and file workers, not left in the hands of national and local officials.■

Non-payers in court; turn to page 4

WANDSWORTH

WANDSWORTH IS Thatcher's flagship borough. In the May local elections Wandsworth Tories bought their way to another term in office with a Poll Tax of £148. This was achieved by spending £17 million of the Council's reserves and generous government handouts.

The real cost of this has now been brought home to workers in the area. The Tories plan to close four secondary schools and up to 24 primary schools as part of a £52 million cuts package.

Day nurseries and old people's homes will be closed. Council leader Sir Paul Beresford claims "services which met valuable needs in the past may today be outdated". He has cut the number of social workers by 10%.

The voluntary sector is also under attack. The Tories plan to cut £3 million from 34 voluntary groups and are considering axeing another 106. Services to go include Women's Aid and all the local Law Centres.

After twelve years of attacks on jobs and services, and with the highest Council rents in London, local workers have had enough. A half day strike by the voluntary sector brought over 1000 onto the streets. Members of the NUT responded to the threat to schools with an 83% vote for strike action. Nalgo members, threatened with the loss of up to 500 jobs, joined them in a day of action on 27 September.

At the same time Wandsworth Tories have to contend with a growing, militant anti-Poll Tax campaign. In response they have tried to intimidate non-payers with early morning raids by bailiffs. With police backing these hired thugs have forced their way into homes.

Local APTUs have mobilised large groups of workers on the estates under threat to see off the bailiffs who have not yet dared return.

They called a joint meeting against the cuts with NUT and Nalgo speakers. From this a Fightback Committee has been launched, with delegates from all local unions and anti-Poll Tax groups, parents, unemployed and voluntary sector users. The Fightback committee must take the lead in co-ordinating resistance in Wandsworth, fighting for all-out strike action against the cuts, non-implementation of the Poll tax and trade union support for mobilisations against the bailiffs.

Schools and libraries threatened with closure should be occupied by staff and users. Anything less will allow the Tories to break the unity in action that is beginning to gel, and defeat the Wandsworth working class section by section.■

THREE ANTI-FASCISTS have been sentenced to a total of eleven years imprisonment following a fight with leading fascist Nicky Crane. To help support them and any others who are fined and imprisoned due to anti-fascist activities Anti-Fascist Action is setting up a defence fund. We urge all readers to contribute to it and send messages of solidarity to:

Tony, Mark and David via
AFA BM 1734 London WC1N 3XX

Anti-Fascist Action

DEMONSTRATE!

AFA and NUS London are calling on all anti-fascists to join a counter-demonstration against the National Front (Flag Group) march to the cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. Get your organisation to sponsor the demo, send banners etc.

Sunday 11 November (details in next month's issue)

POLL TAX

From court action to strike action!

MILLIONS OF people are still refusing to pay their Poll Tax bills. In Liverpool the level of non-payment is as high as 51%. The Institute of Public Finance put the number of non-payers on the register in England and Wales up to 30 August at eight million, and forecast an overall deficit of £1.7 billion.

It would be easy to conclude from such figures that the struggle to defeat the Poll Tax was heading towards victory. Certainly the *Militant* leadership of the campaign states week in, week out that "we are winning" and "non-payment is working". This is not the case.

Around the country many councils have initiated court action to obtain liability orders against non-payers. Anti-Poll Tax Unions (APTUs) are on the defensive as the struggle moves from the streets and workplaces to the steps of local Magistrates Courts.

According to *Militant*, the leadership of the Poll Tax Federation, none of this makes any difference.

With members of local APTUs acting as "Mackenzie's friends" (lay advisers) in the courts they have attempted to "tie up then courts in legal procedure" and delay the issuing of liability orders. When courts have adjourned cases the campaigns have hailed this as a victory.

But magistrates courts do not exist as neutral arbitrators between non-payers and the local council. They exist to enforce the bosses' law. The same magistrates courts which the APTU's see as an arena for fighting the Tax are the same ones that dish out "exemplary sentences" to Trafalgar Square demonstrators.

As the cases have preceeded the courts have used their authority to limit the effectiveness of the Mackenzie friends, either refusing to allow them or insisting on rigid court procedure. the result is Magistrates are rubber stamping liability orders hundreds at a time.

It is only by mobilising hundreds of workers that we can efectively defend non-payers dragged before the courts. In Colchester a demo which involved student nurses, lorry drivers and striking engineers broke into the court and severely disrupted the proceedings. In Sunderland police had to use a bomb scare to evacuate over 300 protestors who had occupied the court. In Sheffield, where over 1,000 turned up outside the courts, a fighting example was set by 16 lecturers who walked out of work in support of two colleagues summonsed for non-payment.

The number of workers refusing to pay the tax is not reflected by the number active in th local APTUs. The passivity of the non-payment campaign must carry the blame for that.

The councils have two real options once they get their liability orders; the bailiffs or wage arrestment.

The Certified Bailiffs Association admits that with only 1,000 certified bailiffs in England and Wales they face an uphill battle. The Confederation of British Industry believes that wage arrestment will "undoubtedly incur the displeasure of any employees from whom the deductions are made, with a consequential adverse effect on public relations".

To turn their fears into reality the APTUs must transform themselves into an army of activists, taking the fight to every workplace and every estate. The threat of prosecutions must be met with strike action, mass demonstrations and occupation of the courts.

Bailiffs must be met by workers' defence squads who'll teach these modern day bounty hunters a swift lesson in class justice.

Alll trade union organisations must be won to strike action against wage arrestment and against victimisation of workers who refuse to implement the tax.

The vital precondition for this is for Poll Tax activists to break with the Federation leadership which believes that a strategy of passive disobedience is "unbeatable" and has turned working class activists into an army of Perry Masons rather than fight for the strike action necessary to win.■

Trafalgar Square – the video; turn to page 6

Coventry protester dies

BOB PHELAN died after trying to protest against the Poll Tax. Mr Phelan, 57 years old, was in Coventry's magistrates' court on 26 September opposing the Labour Council's efforts to penalise non-payers. Despite protests from his wife, who made known Mr Phelan's heart condition, the police dragged him from the court and manhandled him. He collapsed but court offcials refused to allow his fellow protestors to call an ambulance. When the ambulance finally arrived it proved too late. Mr Phelan died at the hospital.

Mr Phelan's only crime was to refuse to pay an unfair and iniquitous tax. The Labour council was trying to force him to pay. The police, as usual, showed no restraint in dealing with people they regard as "troublemakers".

There have been protests at Mr Phelan's death, including the disruption of a council finance meeting. There is a demand for a public enquiry into his death.

Coventry Workers Power supporters send their condolences to Mr Phelan's wife, family and friends. We pledge to continue the fight he so bravely supported and honour his memory by stepping up our campaign for militant working class action to smash the Poll Tax.■

CIVIL SERVICE

Stop victimisations!

Civil Service workers are under attack. After a watershed defeat for the unions in 1987 over pay the Tories went onto the offensive. They set about privatising the civil service in a piecemeal fashion, the better to keep the workers divided.
Their first step was to set up agencies, which would remain within the civil service, but which would allow the management leeway to attack jobs, wages and conditions in preparation for full scale privatisation.
Militants are having to build the fightback at a local level. Workers Power spoke to one civil service militant who was recently victimised and sacked for his union activities.

WP: What events led up to your victimisation.?

Simon: Despite having had a good report after my first six months and despite having had no warnings—something I'm supposed to be entitled to—I got a bad report after my first probationary year.

My probation was extended and then, again without warnings, and in flagrant defiance of my rights, I was given another adverse report and sacked.

WP: What was the real reason they picked on you to victimise?

S: Companies House (CH), where I work is an Agency. It's being primed for full blown privatisation. Part of this priming is grinding down the unions. The management are intimidating the workforce through a series of arbitrary sackings. By sacking a trade union militant they were saying to other members—this is what's in store for you if you get involved in the union.

WP: Did you get any support for your fight against victimisation?

S: There was widespread support, and not just from people who were politically sympathetic to me. There was a generous collection and when it came to action a one day strike was well supported by the CPSA (my own union) though the NUCPS lost a strike vote by two. One problem was that the activists at CH didn't build on this action. It needed to be linked to the other sackings that have taken place, the speed-ups and the court injunction that had prevented us from taking action against the National Front's attempt to register at CH. Unfortunately when I argued for a joint campaign by the CPSA and NUCPS on these issues I did not get much support.

WP: What was the role of the branch officers?

S: They gave me plenty of support so far as my appeal was concerned but when it came to action they used the injunction over the National Front issue to drag their feet.

They wouldn't move unless it was officially sancctioned by head office. They were against linking the various issues and both unions conspired to keep their members separate, even insisting on separate ballots.

So, although the aggregate vote showed a majority in favour of a strike in my support the NUCPS vote was counted separately. Two votes kept them out of the action!

The whole experience has some valuable lessons. I was victimised because of my trade union activity. Management are attacking us on a broad front and they want to get rid of the opposition.

The lesson is we need to fight back on a broad front by organising the rank and file in the workplaces and linking the different attacks.■

BETWEEN 15 OCTOBER and 3 November a ballot is being held in the two main civil service unions, the CPSA and the NUCPS, on a proposal to merge the two unions. Workers in both unions should vote against the merger. It is a bureaucratic stitch up that will undermine the CPSA's position as a civil service union.

By bringing countless managers from the NUCPS into the same union as the workers they manage the merger will undermine the ability of civil service workers to fight back against the broad range of attacks they face.

STOP THE MERGER!

A good example of how this will work is the case of Simon (see interview). The manager who spied on him and reported him was an NUCPS member able to vote against strike action to support Simon's reinstatement. The whole reporting system gives managers the right to fire workers, raise or lower the wage scales and determine their conditions of work. Having these managers in the same union as the workers they report on won't influence their decisions. It will simply increase their ability to undermine action.

Of course the NUCPS is not simply managers and we are in favour of a single civil service workers' union. But a merger to create such a union is unthinkable until the NUCPS has been split along manager-worker lines. This can be done by militants in the NUCPS taking up the fight against the reporting system, pushing a boycott of it by EO grades. Bosses' narks who scab must be disciplined, persistent offenders must be expelled. A fight for workers' control in the workplaces must be taken up and counterposed to the reporting system, and a recruitment drive on the basis of a pre-entry closed shop must be carried out. Against the current preparations for privatisation and attacks on pay and pensions, joint rank and file committees of both unions must be established so that real fighting unity is built up in the workplaces.

Within the CPSA a "Stop the Merger Campaign" was set up last May. It has a lot of support in the CPSA but little in the NUCPS. The campaign should be supported by all branches within both unions. But if it is to play a role in building an industrial union ,as opposed to the bureaucratic stitch up proposed, it must address the NUCPS militants with the policies outlined above. Otherwise there is a danger that offcials in the CPSA will simply use the campaign for their own sectional and careerist purposes.■

For more information contact:
Stop the Merger, c/o 191 Burford Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham, NG7 6AY

Nurses at the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield are striking to stop shift changes. Management want to cut the current ten hour night shift by 38 minutes.

Sheffield nurses fight shift changes



FAR FROM allowing night nurses to work fewer hours, the change would add an extra shift a month for full time workers. And it would mean a cut in pay for part time workers.

Despite management's attempt to split the workforce by offering to guarantee existing part time workers their current shifts, a COHSE ballot delivered a 77% vote in favour of strike action. The night nurses were united in their determination to oppose the shift changes. A significant number of nurses in the no-strike Royal College of Nursing (RCN) left that organisation and signed up with COHSE so they could join the fight.

Workers Power supporters argued that the attack on working conditions is part of the bosses' preparations for the Northern General opting out. The way to stop these plans in their tracks was to strike. The fact that management have launched a wide range of attacks on the workforce gave weight to our arguments.

In Hull similar attacks on shift patterns are threatened. In Scotland nurses working for the Lothian Health Board are facing even more stringent attacks on their conditions. They are holding a ballot for strike action.

Attacks

More and more attacks will come as management prepare to implement the NHS Bill. This encourages hospitals to become self-governing bodies or separate business organisations. It allows hospitals that opt out to set their own rates of pay and working conditions. They could even refuse unions any recognition.

The actions in Sheffield and elsewhere, such as in Fife where nurses struck against the grades they were given, are good starting points in the campaign to defeat these plans to break up the NHS. Such actions need to be built upon and spread across the country. But the union leaders prefer to fight the NHS Bill by parliamentary questions and publicity campaigns.

But with NUPE's Roger Poole talking about the need for nurses to work to grade, with the COHSE conference calling for action over clinical grading by the end of the year, and with a national campaign on ancillary pay, the chance exists unite the health workers for a real fight with the government is there.

This means using the current disputes to build up strong rank and file organisation on a hospital and city wide basis. It means building joint shop stewards' committees accountable to their members through mass meetings and publicising the case for strike action in regular bulletins.

Winning the battle over shift changes in the Northern General today is an important first step in taking forward the struggle for such organisation and for a national fightback.■

Send messages of support and donations to the strike fund to:

COHSE Sheffield General Branch Union Office
Northern General Hospital
Herries Road
Sheffield S5 7AU



Schools crisis deepens

MANY CHILDREN returned to school in September to find that they had no teacher.

Whilst various "experts" are giving their opinions on the standard of spelling in the bosses' press the education system is falling apart for want of money, teachers and resources.

Teachers are not being recruited and many are leaving for better paid and less stressful jobs. Teachers from overseas, recruited on the cheap and with no guarantee of retraining, are not filling the gap.

In the London Borough of Hackney there are currently 200 vacancies in teaching. Most of these posts are being filled by temporary or supply staff. But, at the beginning of term thirty posts were unfilled and children simply had to be sent home. At one primary school classes were sent home for over two weeks because the school was five teachers short.

The government doesn't seem to be unduly worried. Perhaps this is because most of the kids in Hackney have working class parents. In fact the Tories are pressing for greater cuts in education. Wandsworth, their favourite London borough, is planning to close as many as four secondary schools and 28 other educational facilities.

The government also want a tough stance on teachers' pay. Not very difficult for them since they impose teachers' pay awards. Education Secretary, John MacGregor, wants a pay formula linking teachers' pay to an average based on increases across the lowest grade white collar workers in the public sector—the "interquartile range".

This formula is an arbitrary and ludicrous way to deal with the problems of a teachers shortage. The offer will take no account of inflation or the decline in teachers' "real" wages over the years of imposed settlements below the rate of inflation.

With larger classes, less money for resources and low pay teachers will continue to leave schools.

In response to the MacGregor formula, which would result in a rise of about 8%, the Executive ot the National Union of Teachers (NUT) is recommending a pay claim of 10% plus £1,500 for all teachers. They beleive the strategy to win this claim should focus around yet another publicity campaign aimed at "public opinion". The claim and strategy will be discussed at a Special Salaries Conference of the NUT in Scarborough on 3 November.

Teachers are told that the Executive recommendation represents the wishes of the membership. The Executive did consult local union associations last term, but no one other than the Executive seems to have been able to analyse the results—rather too convenient!

The Executive recommendation represents the lowest figure they believe they could get away with at the conference and the proposed strategy is designed to avoid a campaign of action.

The left within the union, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union, have agreed to a joint approach to the Salaries Conference.

At a meeting in London on 15 September, delegates from local union groups throughout the country discussed and agreed an amendment to the Executive's recommendation. The amendment is for a claim of a flat rate increase for all teachers of £3,200. It also calls for a one day strike in the spring, followed by escalating strike action and other forms of action, such as not covering for absent teachers and boycotting testing.

A flat rate claim will benefit lower paid teachers most. It will be vital in recruiting new teachers and protecting those who do not receive the additional responsibility allowances. The left's amendment also recognises that strike action and not glossy adverts will win the claim.

The left's commitment to such action is more of a problem. At the September meeting only Workers Power raised the need for all out strike action. We were then told by members of the SWP that this was an impossible call and would scare off the membership. At the same time they admitted it would be necessary to win the claim.

This is no way for the left to lead a pay campaign. If we are to win decent wages for teachers, resist redundancies and stop cuts, we will need a membership committed to taking all out strike action and we need to openly campaign for that in the schools from now.■

OIL WORKERS ... Safety at stake

THE STRUGGLE for union recognition and improved health and safety conditions in the offshore oil industry has become a bitter war of attrition. The danger now exists that the bosses' tactics of mass sackings and ruthless intimidation will defeat the courageous fight led by the Oil Industry Liaison Committee (OILC).

The series of six one-day strikes and the threat of further limited action has wrought havoc with the offshore contractors' maintenance programme, especially in the East Shetland basin. The action to date, however, has not wrung a single concession from the employers. Meanwhile, more than 1,500 men and women remain sacked without a penny of support from the official unions to which many of them belong.

As September drew to a close the oil bosses had further strenghtened their position. In the wake of the Piper Alpha disaster the Department of Energy mandated the companies to install emergency safety shutdown valves on the platforms. Now, taking advantage of the Gulf crisis to maximise production and reap vast profits, the new "oil minister", Colin Moynihan waived the bosses' obligations to carry out these safety measures by the end of the year. He even had the gall to accuse the offshore workers of endangering their own safety!

OILC is unclear on what its next move should be. It abandoned a planned 48-hour strike by "bears" working in the southern gasfields off the Anglian coast and in Morecambe Bay, after one of the major contractors announced hundreds of redundancies to take effect from late October. A layer of activists from the northern sector of the oilfield remain onshore, victimised eight weeks ago. With its shock troops depleted the OILC is reluctant to call for any escalation.

The AEU's Jimmy Airlie heaped praise on the OILC at the TUC Congress in Blackpool, yet he and the other union tops have done nothing to organise the ballot for official strike action among the "bears".

The job of actually compiling a register of union members has fallen to the offshore workers' paper, *Blowout*, which ran two pages to publicise the ballot without receiving any financial backing from the seven unions involved. The union bureaucrats clearly hope that the anger of August will diminish as the winter strengthens its grip over the North Sea.

The OILC has continued its refusal to make a clean break with the trade union officials and is now paying a high price. Even so, the struggle is far from over. In the days and weeks ahead militants must seek to prepare ever larger sections of the workforce for the necessity of an indefinite strike throughout the offshore industry, twinned with platform occupations.

In the meantime trade unionists elsewhere need to intensify their efforts to win sustained financial support for the OILC and its sacked supporters through invites to OILC speakers, regular collections and levies. Especially in the seven unions concerned activists must seek to expose the criminal role of union officials and forge an effective opposition to their undermining of the dispute.

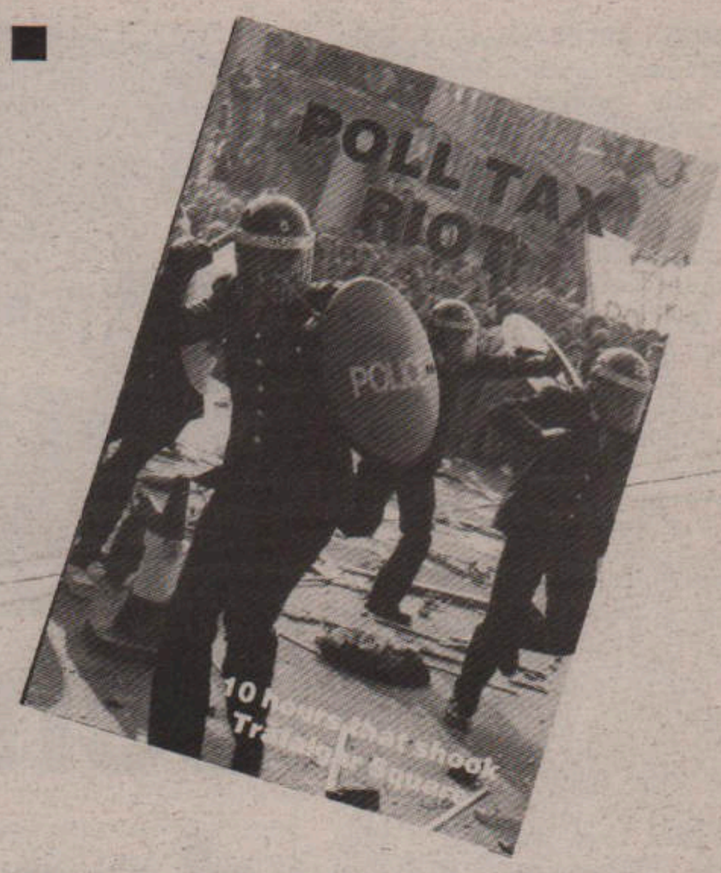
The stakes remain high. As *Blowout* editor Neil Rothnie, himself a former "bear", puts it:

"Unless we win, a disaster of Piper Alpha proportions is just a matter of time."■

SUBSCRIBE!
Blowout
£25 for 100, £15 for 50
Write to:
Blowout, 52 Guild Street
Aberdeen, AB1 2NB
Tel; 0224 210118

"Seeing those cops run..."

Nick Stone reviews
Poll Tax Riot (Acab Press)
and *Battle of Trafalgar*
(Channel 4 TV)



ON SATURDAY 31 March 250,000 people demonstrated in the streets of London against the Poll Tax. The march had been boycotted and sabotaged by the official leaders of the labour movement. It ended with a pitched battle in Trafalgar Square and a police riot through the West End of London.

Since then there has been a desperate attempt by the media to cover-up the fact that the cause of the violence on the day was a police attack on the demonstration.

The Battle of Trafalgar documentary and the pamphlet *Poll Tax Riot* provide two "alternative" views of the events of March 31. Both provide a clear picture of the police violence from the point of view of the ordinary demonstrators. But both are flawed by their implicit political standpoints.

Subtitled "Ten hours that shook Trafalgar Square", and dedicated "to all working class heroes", Poll Tax Riot is made up of accounts of what happened in Trafalgar Square on the day: the mood of celebration at the start; the gradual realisation of the need to defend the demo are perfectly captured.

The video documentary is also based on individual accounts of the events and claims to present them in the order they happened: something the "professional" news media failed to do in their immediate response to the violence.

From both accounts it is clear that the police made a conscious decision to escalate the trouble after a small section of the demo had staged a sit-down protest outside Downing Street for thirty minutes. The TV documentary clearly shows agents provocateurs being bustled into the crowd by uniformed police. With the most minimal of pretexts, the police not only decided to unleash mounted and riot squad police in Whitehall, but to do so in a way that forced the trouble up into the passive crowd of around 100,000 in Trafalgar Square.

When this initial charge met with resistance the police resorted to textbook tactics of riot control, what Martin Walker calls "colonial policing" on the video documentary. Riot squads batoned bystanders and demonstrators alike, police horses trampled demonstrators underfoot and vans were driven at speeds of up to 40 mph into dense crowds.

What happened next was a testament to the fighting spirit of working class people. Groups of workers and youth started to regroup, arm themselves with whatever was at hand and fight the police with a level of bravery and self sacrifice not seen since the Miners' Strike of 1984-85.

It is here that the responses of the two accounts diverge. The video makers acknowledge at the start that, like all films, this has been edited. The video coverge makes careful use of techniques designed to prevent footage being used to incriminate demonstrators.

But it is no accident that there is hardly a single example in the video of demonstrators successfully resisting a police attack. Everyone who was there on the day knows that time and again youth were able to drive back police, rescue arrested demonstrators etc. The crucial moment when the initial police attack in Whitehall was repulsed in chaos is missing from the video account although *Poll Tax Riot* contains an account of the exhilaration of that moment:

"The police line broke and as they fled down Whitehall through the oncoming crowd, hand to hand fighting erupted . . . In all the demos I've ever been on, seeing those coppers run was the most empowering moment ever." (p49)

Whilst exposing the brutality of the police, the video fails to expose the political cowardice of the march organisers, the Militant-led Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Roy Hattersley is shown frothing on about exemplary sentences, but what about Steve Nally and Tommy Sheridan who condemned the fighters as troublemakers and promised on the very same news bulletins to "name names"?

The pamphlet, on the other hand, is heavily influenced by anarchism, both in its style (lots of pictures captioned "Get the bastards!") and its substance.

One particular account reads: "the real battle is a political one, and that includes beating the left scum . . none of them have any concept of people being able to act without leadership even when they see it for themselves. From Militant to Workers Power they all repeat the words of the tabloids and talk of "troublemakers"."

This is not true.

Workers Power condemned the Militant's leadership and stood shoulder to shoulder with the active fighters. We did differentiate between resisting police attack and going on a spree of destruction and random looting. But we refused to condemn the looters as "troublemakers".

Unfortunately, the whole day proved that leadership is vital in this, as in every working class struggle. The Militant leadership abandoned the demo to the police. There was no alternative leadership on the day and resistance had to be improvised. It failed and hundreds of working class youth have passed through the courts as a result.

Organised defence squads with the support of the majority of the crowd could have successfully defended the demonstration and directed its anger towards more useful targets than the shops in Regent Street. But that needs revolutionary political leadership, something neither Militant nor the anarchists can provide.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE
DEFENCE CAMPAIGN
c/o Room 205
Panther House
38 Mount Pleasant
London WC1 0AP

The truth about Vietnam

Jenny Scott reviews the latest issue of *Revolutionary History*

MENTION HO Chi Minh and there are still plenty of so called "Trotskyists" who will tell you what a great revolutionary fighter he was. Coming into politics at the time of the USA's war against North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) in the South, such "Trotskyists" are generally ignorant of the real history of the Vietnamese revolution.

This ignorance has been wilfully maintained. Both the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and what was Gerry Healy's International Committee (IC) decided a long time ago that the Vietnamese Stalinists, and their leader Ho, were the standard bearers of the permanent revolution in Indochina. The military victories of the Stalinist-led forces over first the French and then the US imperialists, made a lot of people susceptible to this nonsense.

The latest issue of *Revolutionary History* (Volume 3, No 2) sets the record straight on Vietnam. A series of documents from the Vietnamese Trotskyists, as well as book extracts on the subject of Vietnamese Trotskyism, are republished.

They shed light on the debates within Vietnamese Trotskyism about how to conduct an anti-imperialist united front, an issue as relevant today as when the documents were first written.

The accounts of the 1945 Vietnamese revolution reveal the treachery of Ho Chi Minh and the Stalinists at the time. Committed to the "stages" strategy of revolution, Ho sacrificed the independent interests of the workers, as well as the aspirations of the poor peasants, to the Allied imperialists and their agents in Vietnam. The Stalinists welcomed the French and British troops back into the South, and disarmed the Trotskyist led sections of the masses who tried to resist imperialism.

The heroism of the Vietnamese masses in the wars that followed should not blind us to the Stalinist betrayal of 1945. In deliberately blocking the possibility of proletarian revolution the Stalinists were responsible for needlessly prolonging the wars with imperialism. The defeat of imperialism was delayed by thirty years.

Not only was the revolution itself betrayed but its vanguard, the Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party and the League of International Communists, was massacred on Ho's direct orders. Trotskyist leaders, like Ta Thu Thau were killed because, according to Ho, they would not obey his class collaborationist line.

The Trotskyist groups in Vietnam, though small in numbers, had real mass influence in the people's committees established in the 1945 revolution. Their tactics, their debates and their differences, revealed in these documents are a rich legacy from which we can learn a great deal.

***Revolutionary History* is to be congratulated for making such material available. It is a fitting tribute to the revolutionary fighters murdered by Ho, exposing Stalinism, even in its Vietnamese variant, as counter-revolutionary. It is also an indictment of the wretched centrists of the USFI and IC whose distortions and cover-ups insulted the memory of the courageous Vietnamese Trotskyists.■**

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY



The Big Man

Gary Boyle reviews
David Leland's
The Big Man

WILLIAM McILVANEY'S novel, *The Big Man*, is the basis for the film of the same name currently on general release. Its hero, Danny Scoular, is a sacked miner from a Scottish pit village, victimised for his role in the Great Strike of 1984-85.

Scoular, played by Liam Neeson, was jailed during the strike, for GBH on a policeman. After his release he finds himself, like so many of those sacked for their role in fighting Thatcher, without prospects and caught in a downward spiral towards poverty and loss of self-respect.

A strike leader, but not a seasoned trade union militant, Danny has no political answers to his plight. The pressure of poverty on himself and his wife and kids drives him into the arms of a local gangster, Matt Mason, rather than into his local National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign.

Mason tempts Danny into the world of illegal bare knuckle fighting with offers of easy money. It seems to be an ideal solution. He is tough and desperate. He can fight and get paid for it. The film's strength is its exposure of quite how rotten this solution really is.

Instead of resolving his problems, Danny's involvement with Mason intensifies them. His dignity as a human being and as a worker is destroyed. As his wife tells him:

"The strike was different. That was something worth fighting for. Our jobs, our pride. Now you're just a rich man's pawn."

This point is hammered home by the fight scene itself. In slow motion we see Danny and his opponent grapple, kick, punch and gouge each other. Like pit bull terriers they are made to fight until the blood flows and one of them drops. And in the background Mason and the other man's backer bet and barter over the fighters' lives.

Redemption for Danny comes through the people of his own village. The strike he lived through with them was sustained by working class solidarity. When he runs into difficulties with Mason that solidarity reasserts itself and brings Danny back from the brink of destruction.

Despite its flaws, particularly its ambivalence towards the question of justified class violence, this film does celebrate the working class' capacity for resilience, for standing together against common enemies and for picking itself up off the floor after defeats and preparing for new struggles. Its director, David Leland, has done a good job. Go and see it.■



As the imperialist armies mass in the Gulf their political masters are celebrating a "new world order". The celebrations are premature, writes ***Arthur Merton.***

New world order:



built on sand

US military supremacy, paid for by the rich but militarily powerless ruling classes of Germany, Japan and Saudi Arabia, guaranteed by a Stalinist dagger in the back of anybody who resists: that is the true picture of the new world order Bush wants. But can he get it?

DOUGLAS HURD, the Tory Foreign Minister, called the Gulf crisis "a defining moment" in world politics. US President Bush is pushing the same message at every opportunity. The time is ripe, he told the United Nations, for a "new world order".

They are right in one respect. The "old order" has crumbled and world politics stands at an historic turning point. But a new world order of peace and co-operation between the nations of the world is impossible as long as capitalism exists.

The only "world order" that can emerge from the alliance Bush has cobbled together over the Gulf is one based on continued repression, exploitation and bitter quarrelling over the spoils. And even that is not guaranteed.

After the Second World War Stalinism expanded into Eastern Europe and China. US imperialism emerged as the leading political and economic power in the imperialist camp. The two sides confronted each other in a Cold War. This was the "old" world order, erected on top of massive defeats for the working class in the 1930s and during the war. For years, despite many national liberation struggles in the semi-colonial countries, the political revolutionary crises in Eastern Europe and the class struggle in the imperialist heartlands, this order survived.

In 1989 all of that changed. A revolutionary crisis exploded in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev, at the helm of the USSR, steered a course toward pro-market economic reform and political liberalisation. But instead of the orderly reforms envisaged by the bureaucracy the masses stepped in, toppling the Stalinist regimes throughout Eastern Europe.

In the course of the last twelve months the working class of Eastern Europe, repulsed by socialism because of the crimes the Stalinists had committed in its name, fell under the leadership of pro-capitalist forces. In East Germany capitalism was restored. The governments of the other degenerate workers' states all want to follow suit. For the moment the crisis has been resolved to the benefit of the imperialist bosses.

The imperialist politicians were confident enough to declare: "The Cold War is over. We have won". It was, according to the imperialist pundit Francis Fukuyama, "the end of history". Capitalism, in its liberal democratic form, would rule the world. The USSR, confidently expected to follow East Germany on the road to capitalist restoration, was invited to play a role in helping shape that world order.

Yet behind the rhetoric the imperialists were pondering as to how to shape a world that would guarantee their continued, and now extended, scope for exploitation. Now that the USSR was no longer an immediate threat, no longer a check on US intervention in the semi-colonial world, how were the contradictions, that still wracked the world and still gave rise to endless conflict, to be resolved?

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait has concentrated the imperialists' minds acutely on these problems.

The Middle East, a powder keg of artificially created states, unresolved national conflicts and vast oil reserves, was always bound to explode.

In order to preserve cheap oil the imperialists need to maintain the national divisions of the area and preserve the ruling cliques—both royal and military. In order to defend its client state, Israel, and overcome its one-sided reliance on the Israelis, US imperialism needs to strengthen its military capacity in the region. In order to resolve the Palestinian question and the conflict in Lebanon to its own advantage imperialism has to increase its political leverage with the major Arab states.

Saddam's invasion has given imperialism a pretext to achieve all of these goals. In the Iran/Iraq war Kuwait's ships flew the US flag to protect themselves from the missiles of both sides. Today "poor little Kuwait" has become the flag of convenience for a massive imperialist intervention.

During the 1970s the military fortunes of the USA and its puppets took a sharp knock, in Vietnam, Southern Africa, Iran and Nicaragua. Throughout the 1980s Reagan struggled effectively to reassert military supremacy. But as the US debacle in Lebanon showed, the Middle East remained the weak link in US military hegemony.

Since the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979 the USA has been heavily reliant on Israel as the policeman of the region. It has longed for the opportunity to reassert itself militarily in the region, something which could only be done with the approval of the USSR and a majority of Arab states.

Once Saddam invaded Kuwait the USA saw its chance.

According to US Secretary of State James Baker:

"Our strategy is to lead a global alliance if you will, to isolate Iraq politically, economically and militarily . . . In this effort, America must lead, and our people must understand that. We remain the one nation that has the necessary political, military and economic instruments at our disposal to catalyse a successful response by the international community . . . Only American engagement can shape the peaceful world that our people so deeply desire."

US military supremacy, paid for by the rich but militarily powerless ruling classes of Germany, Japan and Saudi Arabia, guaranteed by a Stalinist dagger in the back of anybody who resists: that is the true picture of the new world order Bush wants. But can he get it?

The fundamental problem facing US imperialism is the contradiction between its political supremacy and its economic decline. This was true throughout the 1970s and 80s as Japan and a Europe dominated by West Germany emerged as real challengers to the USA in the world economy.

From the days when the USA accounted for 52% of global GNP it was down to 26% in the 1980s. From being the world's banker it changed, by 1985, to one of the biggest debtor nations.

The problem was already manifest as Stalinism collapsed. Far from the USA reaping the benefits of winning the Cold War it was German and Japanese capital which rushed into Eastern Europe.

And now, to fund a military offensive designed to defend cheap oil for the whole imperialist world, America has to go cap in hand to Japan, Germany and the oil sheikhs.

A world based on exploitation and repression will always need a world policeman: a policeman who will stop two-bit villains like Saddam getting in the way of the super-crooks who run and own the imperialist countries. Having denied Germany and Japan any military role for over forty years only the USA is capable of playing that role. But it is economically incapable of sustaining itself in that role. In this lies one of the biggest threats to the imperialist order, new or old.

Certainly the response of their former "adversary", the Soviet bureaucracy, gives the US administration no cause for concern. By acting as a "responsible" ally of imperialism Gorbachev wants more than just a place at the treaty tables. In return for pulling out of Afghanistan, helping sell out the anti-apartheid struggle, pushing for a settlement in Cambodia, Gorbachev wants massive aid for his own failing economy.

In exchange for economic assistance it will help the USA police the world's trouble spots. In keeping with its continued rhetoric about peace and progress it will insist, more loudly than the imperialists, on the need for action to be conducted via the United Nations.

Despite the USSR's abject collaboration there are major problems facing the "new world order". First, there is the task of holding together a military alliance consisting of Israel and the Arab states, and paid for by America's biggest economic rivals.

The whole US project could blow up, literally, in the faces of the participants. If the USA wins at the cost of having to re-colonise Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, if it expends thousands of US soldiers lives only to find itself dug into another Vietnam this will place enormous strains on the inter-imperialist alliance and working class support for the war at home.

These problems only reflect the larger contradictions of the capitalist system.

Britain, after years of the "Thatcher miracle" is in an economic mess. The USA stands on the brink of a recession with unemployment now rising, profits falling and the entire financial system reeling from the collapse of the US building societies.

If they defeat Saddam the imperialists can achieve a carve up that suits their needs for a decade or so. Even then they will have to contend with the recessionary forces in the world economy which appeared long before the latest oil shock.

But if they fail to quickly and decisively subdue Iraq they face a new period of open rivalry, political instability, military paralysis and recession deepened by a sharp, strategic rise in the oil price. Either way the world will remain incapable of satisfying the most basic human needs for the vast majority of its population.

Imperialism's struggle to impose a new world order will arouse opposition from the peoples of the semi-colonies at the sharp end of oppression.

It will evoke hostility amongst the Eastern European masses. They were promised milk and honey by capitalism, but with its return they are having to pay for oil at market prices. The current crisis has already taken Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania to the brink of ruin. Developments in Eastern Europe will be watched by every worker in the USSR, many of whom are already rightly suspicious of Gorbachev's pro-market policies.

And within the imperialist heartlands themselves the workers will begin to fight back, at first against the immediate effects of the impending recession and the effects of war, but increasingly against the system that ruins their lives with the constant threat of unemployment, the constant need to struggle for a living wage, the constant erosion of decent health and education services.

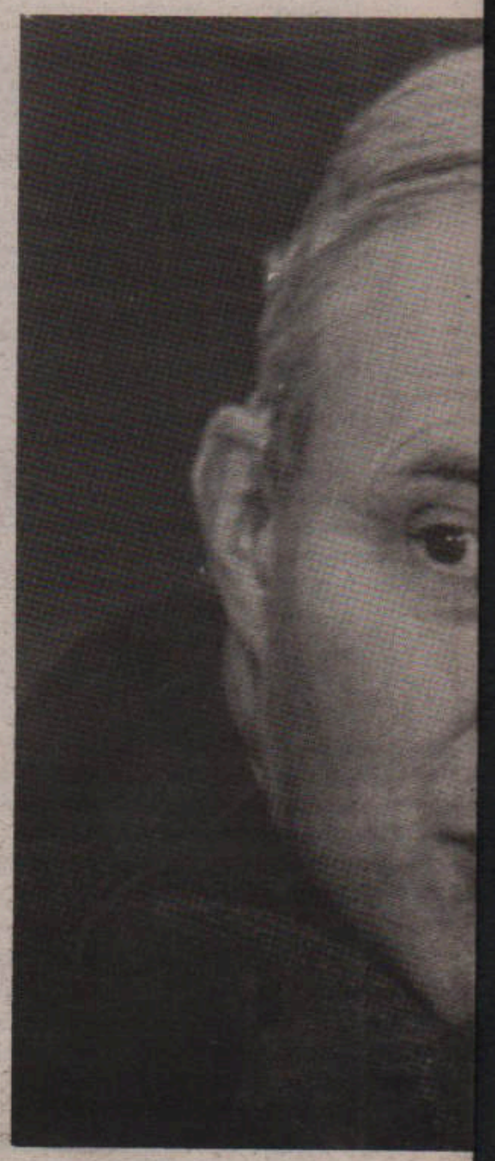
In short the new world order, even if it can be built at all, will be built on sand. It will be undermined by the inner contradictions of capitalism itself—class conflict, imperialist rivalry, economic crisis.

Our job is to utilise every opportunity to prevent the consolidation of the new order. To turn every conflict into a practical struggle for revolution—for the destruction of the imperialist world order and the establishment of genuine peace, freedom and democracy. That will come through the world *socialist* order, and when that is established real human history will begin.■

THE GULF CRISIS

Tony Benn: imperiali left wing face

Within the anti-war movement many leading figures such as Tony Benn suggest that the United Nations provides the best hope for averting war. ***Clare Heath*** *disputes this claim and argues that the sanctions and the UN itself are part of the war drive.*



TONY BENN and Eric Heffer do not want a war in the Gulf. That is clear from their many statements and the passion with which they point to the dangers of such a war. This leads many on the left to take their arguments about the best way to stop that war very seriously. Hardly a week goes by without one of the left papers reprinting a speech from one of these two. Benn graced the platforms of nearly twenty fringe meetings at Labour Party Conference.

Benn came to the fore as the leading opponent of Thatcher's war drive with his motion and speech in the emergency commons debate on the Gulf in early September. Eric Heffer spoke vigourously against the imperialist war, which he argued would be for oil profits not democracy.

But behind these fine words is a strategy which cannot stop war. It is a strategy which will not rid the Gulf of the major de-stabilising force, imperialism, but reassert imperialist control with a more human face. It is the strategy of United Nations (UN) sanctions, "peacekeeping forces" and "defensive military deployment" which every worker should oppose.

Benn declared:

"The House of Commons unanimously condemns the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and supports the UN sanctions."

THE GULF CRISIS

He is not opposed to the idea of an external intervention in the Gulf. First of all he is against Thatcher's willingness to take military action without UN backing, and, secondly, against the build up of the huge US and British force in the Gulf. His preferred option is to use firm sanctions to force Iraq to negotiate a settlement and withdraw from Kuwait.

What is wrong with these arguments so frequently heard from the self-proclaimed leaders of the anti-war movement?

They start from the idea that it is the business of the "international community" to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. Whilst every worker should have opposed the invasion of Kuwait, it is not the business of Thatcher and Bush to sort out the disputed borders. Indeed it was the carving out of false borders as part of imperialism's strategy that created the conditions for the current conflict. The imperialists are the problem, not the solution.

THE GULF CRISIS

There is only one force that has any interest in fighting for the freedom of the peoples of the Middle East from dictators like Saddam and royal despots like the Emir of Kuwait, and that is the working class.

But Benn argues that the UN can and should right the wrongs of the Middle East, firstly through the use of sanctions against Iraq. In the Commons he said; "the sanctions are bound to work so long as the world community can be kept together". In this he shares the stated aim of Thatcher and Bush—international pressure to force Saddam to withdraw.

But what is this "world community"? If he is referring to the UN, then it in no way represents any common interests of the peoples of the world. Even in the impotent General Assembly, which includes many of the non-aligned nations, it is the rulers of all countries who are represented, each with their own interest in denying the rights of workers and the oppressed.

THE GULF CRISIS

In so far as there is a "common interest" at this level, it is to maintain the rule of capitalism. Even the representatives of the Stalinist states co-operate within the UN to maintain stability, and thereby the rule of capitalism or Stalnism thoroughout the world.

The only body with real power in the UN is the Security Council, in particular its five permanent members.

The Security Council, as its name suggests, is there to defend the interests of imperialism. The presence of the USSR and China on this body has at certain times been a restriction for the USA, but with the end of the Cold War and the total surrender of the Stalinists to the imperialists, they too are now united behind Bush and Thatcher.

Today the UN is acting as a fig leaf for naked US aggression, just as it did in Korea in the 1950s. The US wants to reassert its control in the Middle East and to ensure its oil supplies. Iraq's actions are seen as a threat to their domination, and the USA has taken the opportunity to establish a huge military presence in the area to try and win back control. The backing of the UN, on the spurious grounds of support for Kuwaiti sovereignty, is the perfect cover for the real imperialist motives of the US and Britain.

Tony Benn's support for the intervention of the UN is itself a left cover for the imperialists.

In relation to Britain Benn writes:

"Britain should immediately withdraw its land and air forces, and throw its full weight behind the United Nations in implementing the sanctions."

This is not a call for "Troops Out" but for reliance on a sea blockade enforced by the flotilla of battleships in the Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean. For all Benn's speeches against the "gunboat diplomacy" of the past, Benn's stratregy amounts to nothing better.

Added to this he puts forward the idea that the "British" have a common interest in relation to the Gulf, that "we" in Britain should unite in a common struggle to force Iraq to toe the UN line.

British workers are presumed to have a common interest with British bosses in relation to Iraq. But if sanctions were successful and Iraq defeated, even without a war, that would immeasurably strengthen the power of the USA and Britain in the Gulf.

Would that be in the interests of British workers? No. It would strengthen Thatcher, it would increase the ability of the bosses to exploit workers across the globe, confident that if any national uprising or revolutionary struggle threatened their interests then imperialist forces could step in to crush the rebellion. And it would strengthen the bosses in Britain itself, making them more confident in taking on and defeating working class struggles.

THE GULF CRISIS

What Benn refuses to accept is that the whole political crisis in the Middle East, including the Palestinian issue which he hopes the UN can deal with at the same time, is the result of the exploitation of the region by imperialism. In reality the UN can never solve this crisis because it is permanently tied to imperialism by its very nature.

In opposition to Thatcher's war drive Benn argued:

"I am opposed to war against Iraq. I'm opposed to action outside the UN. I believe it would divide the Security Council. It might bring many Arab countries out against us."

Here again Benn reveals himself as a true politician of the ruling class. He opposes anything which would divide the ruling powers in the UN. But he talks fearfully of uniting the Arabs against "us".

The "us" he means is not the world working class, but the imperialist world rulers. If the oppressed workers of the Arab nations, including the dispossessed Palestinians, were united in a common struggle against the imperialist presence in the Gulf then it would be a defeat for our main enemy. But Benn can only see it as a threat.

Benn prefers sanctions to war as the way to bring Saddam into line. The hopes of millions of ordinary people are riding on the bet that sanctions can avert war. But they are mistaken. Sanctions are

MIDDLE EAST

A history of

THE MIDDLE East is rich in the world's most vital natural resource, oil. Yet the vast majority of its population lives in abject poverty and under viciously repressive regimes. Why?

The answer lies in the whole history of colonial and imperialist intervention suffered by the peoples of the Middle East.

As Britain's colonial empire expanded during the nineteenth century attention focused on control of the Arabian peninsular, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea as the site of a possible sea route from Europe to India. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869 Britain was in control of Egypt and the major trade route through the Middle East. But political control of most of the region rested with the decaying Turkish empire.

Once oil was discovered the fragments of the Turkish Empire became the target of first economic, and then outright military, intervention by the big imperialist powers.

After the First World War demolished the Turkish Empire the victors divided up the spoils. They literally divided the region between themselves, "mandating" (giving!) Syria and Lebanon to France, Palestine and Iraq to Britain.

Kuwait was carved out for Britain in the 1920s and Saudi Arabia became an American sphere of influence in the late 1930s.

Israel was created out of part of Palestine in 1947 as a Zionist homeland for the Jews and immediately expanded into neighbouring Arab lands. Beneath this patchwork quilt of artificially drawn borders lie millions of workers and peasants trapped in national and religious states which systematically discriminate against and oppress them:

- the Palestinian Arabs, forcibly removed from their lands and subjected to Israeli occupation;
- the Kurds, a nation of 16, million were conveniently forgotten during the carve up of the Middle East and now exist divided between Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, each of which oppresses them ferociously;
- the Muslims and Druze of Lebanon, trapped in a Christian confessional state.

Each testifies to the arbitary and external considerations imperialism used when dividing up the region

After 1945 a different tendency developed within the system of imperialist exploitation. The USA became the unchallenged imperialist superpower. As well as preventing Japan and Germany from carving out new colonies it was able to force France and Britain to dismantle the colonial and "mandate" system, giving its goods and its currency free access to the whole world economy.

The new states which came into existence inherited the borders, the state bureaucracies, the armies and above all the weak ruling classes of the former colonies and mandates.

No powerful capitalist development had occured prior to independence. the Arab bourgeoisies were geared to helping imperialism exploit the people and natural resources of their country. The colonial regimes and the puppet monarchies they installed had been linked to the feudal ruling classes of the region.

THE GULF CRISIS

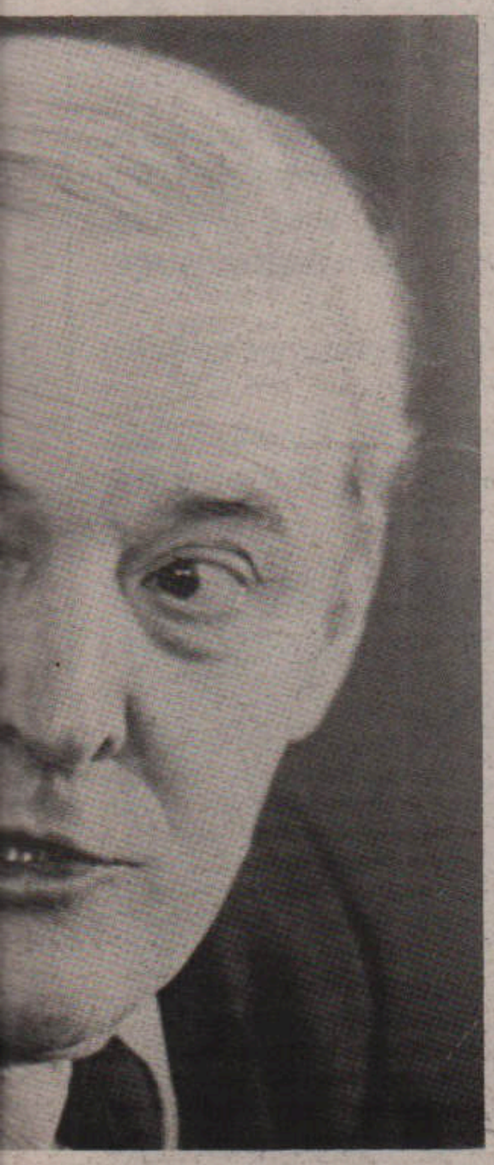
Many of these did not long survive the departure of the British and French colonialists. The result was a series of military dicatorships, professing some form of anti-imperialist, pan-Arab nationalist ideology (Nasserism, Ba'athism etc).

These regimes came into existence during the dramatic ascent of oil as the most critical commodity for a whole new cycle of expansion in the imperialist heartlands.

The major oil corporations—the so-called "seven sisters"—reaped a rich reward from their concessions, pipelines and oil refineries in the region. This enormous natural



sm's



not an alternative to war but a prelude to it. Sanctions are a different way of trying to force Saddam Hussein into submission.

They could only work by crippling the Iraqi economy. Benn has claimed that he opposes a blockade of food or medical supplies, but ultimately by denying Iraq revenue through trade in oil, it will be unable to buy food.

The fact that Iraq is dependent on a large number of imports is itself a demonstration of the way in which imperialism exploits countries, making them dependent on one key product, reducing their capacity to produce other commodities and therefore forcing them onto the world market to purchase essentials.

Sanctions are economic war. Even the distinction between economic and military blurs once the sanctions are enforced by a blockade.

To enforce the blockade means to use the military to prevent ships or aeroplanes taking in goods. The peace-keeping UN that Benn places such trust in has shown itself perfectly willing to back the use of force to impose sanctions.

Sanctions are a form of imperialist intervention. Enforcing them by arms escalates the situation and provides an excuse for the presence of more and more imperialist troops. Sanctions will lead to war, unless the victim of the imperialist blockade surrenders.

Benn and Heffer, like millions of ordinary workers, do not want war. But they do not, in fact, rule out the use of arms, for all their speeches against the horrors of such a conflict.

The early day motion which Benn put forward in parliament in opposition to Thatcher, called for military action to be taken "only" if it was explicitly authorised by a resolution of the UN Security Council.

No doubt conceived as a clever ploy to tie the hands of Thatcher and Bush, it is hopelessly mistaken. If the USA really had to gain the formal backing of either the Security Council or the General Assembly it would do so with the same combination of threats and bribery it has used to construct its coalition of Arab states.

Benn calls for:

"... the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces, to internationally accepted frontiers, in line with all the UN resolutions on the Middle East, and the introduction of UN Peacekeeping forces in all disputed areas."

And who are these UN keepers of the peace? When it suits imperialism they can be a motley collection of tiny military forces from Ireland, Finland etc, such as the Israei army was able to ignore when it swept into Lebanon in 1982. When it really matters, a UN peacekeeping force can be a mighty US army flying the UN's blue flag, such as in Korea.

THE GULF CRISIS

The only force the UN is likely to send to the Gulf is the latter kind: one armed to the teeth and prepared for offensive action to enforce a settlement which had been decided by imperialism and its allies within the UN.

If the current crisis leads to a revolutionary upsurge of the Iraqi and Kurdish workers against Saddam Hussein, of the Saudi Arabian workers and the Palestinians against their oppression and exploitation, then this "peacekeeping force" will not be there to defend their interests.

Unlike Benn and those who believe the illusions he peddles about the UN, we should recognise its reactionary, pro-imperialist role, and will fight to break the blockade, break the sanctions and call for all imperialist troops, whatever flag of convenience they fly, to get out of the Gulf.■

exploitation

wealth had to be kept secure for the imperialists. For most of the 1950s and 60s this was accomplished by British military bases in Aden, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Britain propped up a series of "traditional", i.e. conservative and reactionary, regimes for as long as it could. Their origins lay in the nomadic, tribal and merchant enclaves which dotted the coast of the Arabian peninsular.

Many of these states rapidly became very wealthy from the massive oil royalties accruing from the exploitation of the region's massive reserves. Effectively the tribal-feudal ruling classes suddenly found themselves *rentier* capitalists on a previously unimaginable scale.

Sheikhs, Sultans and Emirs of petty statelets as well as the more substantial Ibn Saud dynasty found that even after the oil companies took their toll they had resources to dispose of. Although they were able to buy the allegiance of a significant proporion of their states tiny populations, they used their wealth neither to raise the living standards of the working masses, nor to invest in the independent development of their national economies.

But the most populated states had little or no oil. Those which did, like Iran and Iraq, sooner or later saw radical military regimes topple the pro-imperialist monarchs.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s several attempts were made to federate the Arab states, attempts which imperialism frustrated through a variety of means.

THE GULF CRISIS

Every time one of the local ruling classes of the Middle East attempts to alter the balance of exploitation in its favour, to divert oil resources towards the development of industry and agriculture it is met by economic sabotage and military intervention—if not by imperialism, then by imperialism's key tool in the region, the state of Israel.

Israel has, up to now, proved well worth the billions of dollars poured into it over four decades. Strategically it splits the whole Arab world in half. It provides a garrison of highly trained troops armed with the most modern weapons, including nuclear arms. It holds the largest number of hostages in the world—the majority of the Palestinian people.

Not one of the Middle Eastern states, has been able to break out of the semi-colonial system and develop a balanced modern economy. Expansionist adventures by countries such as Iraq are not the result of the fact that these countries have become imperialist in the Marxist sense. They are the product of the desperation of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie which is prevented from expanding its sphere of exploitation to the same level as the imperialists.

When George Bush announced he was drawing "a line in the sand" it was nothing new. The whole history of the region is one of lines drawn in the sand by imperialism to suit its own needs and to thwart the aspirations of the masses. When bourgeois politicians from George Bush to Neil Kinnock invoke "international law", again it is nothing new: the whole history of imperialist plunder and violation has been sanctioned by successive international laws and treaties which are always dictated by the strong to the weak.

That is why the only progressive answer to the problems of the Middle East is to get imperialism out: militarily and economically.

The struggle to drive out the imperialist armed forces must be harnessed to the struggle to seize their capital, their oil refineries and factories, as well as those of the "national" capitalists who are thoroughly enmeshed in the world imperialist system of exploitation.■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM

What should Iraqi workers fight for?

IF WAR breaks out between Iraq and the imperialist alliance revolutionary Marxists would support Iraq. A victory for Iraq, even under its present brutal dictator, would be better for the world class struggle than its defeat at the hands of imperialism.

But how does this position apply in Iraq? Doesn't it inevitably mean suspending the class struggle?

It must be tempting for Iraqi militants to see an imperialist victory over the Ba'athist regime as presenting the best opportunity to overthrow Saddam. This temptation to take a defeatist stand in a war with imperialism is understandable, but wrong.

A military defeat for Iraq is not certain to bring down the dictatorship, even if it leads to Saddam's own downfall. The imperialist forces would be only too pleased to see a continued firm hand in Baghdad.

If Saddam and the ruling Ba'athists fall fighting against imperialism their influence will not be removed from the minds of the masses. If the working class and its vanguard are seen to have abstained in the struggle against imperialism their ability to win the leadership of the masses will be enormously set back.

For these reasons Iraqi revolutionaries cannot remain neutral in the struggle against imperialism. They must participate in the national resistance, raising slogans for a genuine war and uprising of the Arab and other peoples of the Middle East to drive out the imperialist forces.

In the first phases of the struggle they must put forward demands on the detestable regime itself.

The regime deceitfully claims to be leading a genuine anti-imperialist struggle. If so it should nationalise all imperialist holdings in Iraq and Kuwait, distribute arms to the workers and the urban and rural poor, enabling them to form militias and elect their own officers. This would prove the most effective way of preventing the onslaught of the imperialists.

Revolutionaries should likewise demand that if sacrifices are to be made during the imperialist blockade, then all should make them, not just the poor. Committees of workers, especially women, should be elected to ration and distribute foodstuffs, fuel, and medical supplies.

Agitation must be launched around revolutionary democratic slogans—an atomised and enslaved people cannot be mobilised against imperialism. Freedom of speech, assembly, press and organisation, both trade union and political, are the most elementary necessities in both Kuwait and Iraq. Amongst these demands central is that for the withdrawal of all Iraqi troops from the Kurdish regions and the proclamation of full and free self-determination for the Kurds, up to and including full state independence.

To rally the oppressed and exploited masses of the Middle East against imperialism and its stooges—King Fahd, Mubarak, Assad, Rafsanjani—it is necessary to give arms to the Palestinians and support their cause with deeds, not rhetoric.

In no sense does the fight for these demands, which recognise imperialism as the main enemy, mean that revolutionary Marxists should give Saddam political support or preach class peace with his regime.

They should continue to express no confidence in Saddam Hussein as an anti-imperialist war leader. His present timidity and future treachery in any real battles against imperialism must be ruthlessly exposed. The course of the war may demand his overthrow, to prevent defeat and disaster. The road to a total victory over imperialism lies over the corpse of his regime. Iraqi workers will have to make a revolution to open up this road.

But today this road lies through a military united front with Saddam against imperialism.

By fighting alongside, even within, the forces loyal to the Ba'athist rulers, so long as they are actually fighting imperialism, revolutionaries will be able to win over rank and file soldiers to opposing the dictatorship, to the establishment of democratic political freedoms.

During the war, if it breaks out, any insurrection or uprising against Saddam must of course be judged against the need to defend Iraq against imperialism and to the objective of winning the war. The former is temporarily subordinated to the latter. This does not mean that it is excluded, but that any decision to undertake an insurrection to topple Saddam would have to be taken with a view to increasing the chances of victory, not in indifference to the prospect of military defeat.

This in no way cuts across the real logic and methods of class struggle. Insurrection is not on the order of the day for scientific socialists unless the vanguard of the masses has been won to it and the broad majority of the proletariat and peasantry will look on it with sympathy and rally to the revolutionary government's defence. To reach an insurrectionary situation within conditions of war the existing dictatorship would have to be disintegrated or disintegrating.

Nor does revolutionary defencism mean that other forms of class struggle—strikes, demonstrations, occupations—are suspended. But clearly in a justified war their objectives will be different and will centre on the objective of workers' control of production in general and war production in particular. The workers' objectives will be to aid the war effort, to defeat sabotage and incompetence, to smash the privileges of the ruling classes and their managers and bureaucrats. Their objective will be to see that food and services are efficiently and equitably distibuted. Thus workers' struggles will aid the drive to defeat imperialism, not hamper it.

The overall objective of the working class must be to turn the limited and petty conflict with imperialism that Saddam launched, and which imperialism has turned into a major conflict, into a real broad anti-imperialist movement of the whole of the Middle East. Within this struggle the perspective must be to win democratic freedoms, above all the freedom to create a revolutionary vanguard party, free trade unions, workers and peasants councils; in short to win class independence.

But this struggle for democracy is inseparable from the struggle against imperialist domination itself. Against the wishes of every bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalist leader the working class must lead the fight to its logical conclusion: the expropriation of all big capitalists and landowners. The revolutionary struggle against both Saddam and imperialist intervention can be combined only in the strategy of permanent revolution: the fight for a workers' and peasants' government and the Socialist United States of the Middle East.■

the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

THE GULF CRISIS

ARBEITERINNENSTANDPUNKT

Stalinists split solidarity committee

AT THE second meeting of the Action Committee Against Imperialist Agression in the Arab Region, the Austrian Communist Party demanded that the slogans of the committee be changed. They demanded that the committee, which had been formed around the slogans, "Imperialist troops Out, No NATO planes over Austrian airspace, Against war preparations" should include a slogan condemning Iraqi agression, otherwise it was not being "even handed".

When the committee refused to accept this demand, pointing out that the main enemy in the Gulf was imperialism the Stalinists walked out, refusing to support the planned rally against imperialist intervention outside America House.

Perhaps more surprising was the fact that the Revolutionary Communist League (RKL) and the Austrian section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) walked out in support! Despite these defections the committee's rally went ahead on 30 August. Two weeks later the Austrian Communist Party, the Socialist Party and the Christian Democrats organised their own eighty strong rally which supported economic sanctions and the UN blockade of Iraq. The RKL apeared on neither of these mobilisations preferring presumably to stay at home!

The committee is pushing ahead to organise anti-imperialist and anti-war activities including meetings at Vienna University and a call for a demonstration immediately any strike is made against Iraq.■

THE GULF CRISIS

REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST TENDENCY

Fighting Bush's war drive

THE RTT, the fraternal organisation of the LRCI in the USA, started working in the Emergency Committee to Stop the War in the Middle East and helped organise for the first big anti-war demonstration in the USA which took place in San Francisco at the end of August. Several hundred protesters marched in a militant demonstration which was reported widely in the American media.

But the Committee rapidly fell under the control of the "Workers World Party" a neo-Stalinist sect which proceeded to ban any socialist speakers apart from themselves from platforms and events. They prefer to provide a platform for liberals, Democrats and the church. As a result a new committee has sprung up called the "Ad Hoc Committee Against the Vietnam War in the Middle East" which involves among others Socialist Action (SA—a sympathising section of the USFI), and the Communist Party. In mid-September a "teach-in" on the Middle East organised by this committee drew over two thousand people.

The RTT has been active in both committees. It has argued the importance of raising slogans against the blockade of Iraq. At one of SA's forums, SA showed it had left none of the USFI's opportunist method behind. When pressed on the need to take up the struggle now against the blockade of Iraq, Jeff Mackler, SA National Secretary and long time SWPer, replied that this was out of the question as the "people" were not ready for such demands, that they did not want to hear anything more than "Bring the boys home". Despite these differences the RTT remains fully behind the committee's attempts to mobilise against the US imperialists' drive to war.

On 20 October mass demonstrations are planned in many major cities in the USA.■

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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. The Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Ost) is a sympathising section.

THE GULF CRISIS

Where now for Kurdish struggle?

From George Bush to Neil Kinnock every capitalist politician now uses the excuse of Saddam Hussein's butchery of the Kurds as justification for intervention in the Gulf. We are asked to forget that whilst Saddam was America's ally the world's great powers and the United Nations did not lift a finger to punish Saddam for the slaughter of thousands of Kurds with poison gas in 1988.

Now Thatcher ghoulishly cites the image of the bodies of Kurdish women and children to preach the virtues of family life.

Kurdish bourgeois nationalists are currently being entertained in the embassies of Britain, France and the USA. Is the imperialist taskforce the answer to the Kurdish people's plight? No, says ***Nick Stone****.*

THE KURDS are a nation of sixteen million whose languages and culture have dominated the Zagross mountain region for over a thousand years. Kurdistan is divided between Iran, Iraq and Turkey—with smaller Kurdish populations in Syria and the USSR. The process of creating modern semi-colonial capitalist states in these countries reduced the Kurds to the status of a persecuted and oppressed national minority in each country.

It was Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, who institutionalised the oppression of the Kurds. In 1924 he banned the Kurdish language, schools, publications and political associations. Every Turkish regime, from then to the present government of Turgut Ozal, has continued the brutal subjugation of the Kurds.

In Iran, since the fall of the short lived Mahabad Kurdish republic in 1946, all expressions of Kurdish national identity banned. Though Kurdish guerrillas played an active part in overthrowing the Shah they were amongst the first victims of the Islamic counter-revolution. In 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini executed hundreds of Kurdish guerrillas and civilians.

In Iraq itself the history of the Kurdish national struggle has been more varied, but just as bloody. When the Ba'athists overthrew the monarchy in 1968 the bourgeois Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), led by the Barzani family, entered into negotiations on limited autonomy with Iraq.



Turkish President Turgut Ozal—still persecuting the Kurds

Pressure

Pressure from the Kurdish masses and the plotting of Israel, Iran and the USA aborted the limited collusion between Saddam and the KDP. In the mid-1970s Barzani led 100,000 Kurds against the Iraqi army. But at the height of the conflict, when Iran had resolved its immediate grievance with Iraq over the Shatel Arab waterway it withdrew all support for the KDP-led forces, enabling Saddam to crush the resistance, executing hundreds and evicting thousands from their homes.

The re-emergence of conflict between Iraq and Iran in the 1980 Gulf War gave new impetus to the Kurdish national uprising in Iraq. By 1983 the Kurds were involved in military conflict with all three oppressor nations. Following the 1988 cease fire the Iraqi government stepped up its repression of the Kurds in the northern provinces. Thousands of Kurdish villages were destroyed and large numbers of Kurds forcibly transported from their homelands to a desert region near the Jordanian border.

In the town of Halabja 5,000 civilians mostly women and children, were slaughtered in August 1988 when Iraqi forces used poison gas to exterminate them. One hundred thousand Kurds fled the poison gas bombs to seek refuge in Turkey. They were left to rot in the refugee camps.

Given the Iraqi regime's history of genocide against the Kurds it would be no surprise if many Kurds saw the answer to their oppression in the build up of US and British forces in the Gulf. But they would be wrong.

The historic responsibility for the plight of the Kurds lies with British imperialism. The Sykes-Picot treaty between Britain and France in 1916 carved up the Turkish Empire into "spheres of influence".

The boundaries of Iran, Iraq and Turkey were established artificially to suit the imperialist exploitation of the region. The repression of the Kurds in each of these countries has been sanctioned by imperialism.

In 1989 after the mass gassing of Kurds had been revealed, the USA resumed lending to Iraq through the Export-Import Bank and extended billions of dollars to Saddam in credit guarantees to purchase agricultural products. In January 1989 the British Minister of trade doubled Iraq's credit limit.

In 1989, when Kurdish refugees fled to Britain to seek political asylum from repression in Turkey hundreds were turned around and sent back on planes by immigration officers without setting foot on British soil.

In October 1989 Siho Iyigres burned himself to death in protest at his imprisonment at Harmonsdworth Detention Centre. Three thousand Kurds currently in London live with the constant threat of detention or forced repatriation.

Tragic

It would be tragic if the Kurdish people of Iraq allowed themselves to be used as puppets by an alliance including two out of three of their biggest oppressors and the imperialist powers responsible for their oppression in the first place. They should not cease the struggle for national self-determination. They should continue to fight to get all Iraqi troops out of the region. But they should refuse to ally themselves with Turkey, Iran and the imperialists.

They should join the Palestinian masses and every progressive force in the Middle East in the defence of the region against US intervention and, if it occurs, in the defence of Iraq against military invasion.■

The Soviet Union is gripped by a political and economic catastrophe no less momentous than that facing the Middle East. Economic chaos and national disintegration have begun to fuel each other, leaving the Stalinist bureaucrats paralysed and divided. Nothing less is at stake than the disintegration of the USSR and the chaotic overthrow of its post-capitalist property relations, writes ***John Hunt.***

USSR 500 days to go?



Gorbachev decrees, but who will obey?

EVERY SOVIET citizen is now experiencing the effects of economic chaos and national conflict on a day to day basis. The paralysis which has gripped the central organs of the state only serves to heighten the unbearable feeling of rage and frustration of the mass of workers.

The old economic system of centralised planning by the all-powerful bureaucracy has broken down. The incoherent elements of market and planning hamper and obstruct one another. The central allocation of resources has all but collapsed. Managers are sending out scouting parties to look for raw materials and for outlets to sell their produce.

Production fell by 2% in the first quarter of 1990. Prime Minister Rhyzkov confirmed it has fallen in the second quarter too, but could not give a figure.

What this cold statistic means for the worker in the factory or fields, for the working class woman in the endless queues, is that the shelves of state stores are empty even of the item which the old bureaucratic plan put there in relative abundance—bread. In Leningrad and other cities there have been strikes and even barricades over the disappearance of tobacco. Everyone expects the situation to get worse as winter approaches.

A bumper harvest has not been reaped in time. As much as 20-25% of it is rotting in the fields. Sending squads of factory workers to the countryside has in turn led to a slump in industrial production.

In a bitter foretaste of the much vaunted "market economy" the staple items of consumption that have disappeared from the state stores reappear in the private markets at unbelievably inflated prices. Meat on the private market costs ten times the price marked on the empty counters in the state shops.

This economic chaos fuels, and is in turn fuelled by, intensified regionalism and nationalism.

The Soviet Republics are refusing to deliver their planned quotas to the central agencies. They refuse to receive orders from, or supply information to, the central planning bodies. Inter-communal strife has disrupted production and communications in Central Asia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Even within the Russian Federation towns such as Sverdlovsk refuse to send materials to Moscow.

Growing

In the rebellious republics of the Caucasus, the Baltics and Central Asia the total separatists are growing in influence. This is increasingly the case in the Ukraine too. Rukh, the nationalist organisation is increasingly led by those who want total independence. More startlingly support for separatist slogans is growing amongst the Donbass miners, most of whom are Russian speakers and in the past opposed Ukrainian separatism.

The parliament of the Russian Federation has adopted its own plan for capitalist restoration at breakneck speed, in stark defiance of the central bureaucracy. The declarations of independence and the severing of economic links have inflamed national feelings within the republics between the majorities and the "new" minorities. After the Moldavian Republic's independence declaration its two largest minorities, the Turkic Gaguaz and the Russians have now declared their own independence from Moldavia.

The conditions for racial conflict and pogroms are developing in parallel with the economic hardship and despair of the population.

The profound social crisis is in turn sharpening the crisis within the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy's paralysis is revealed by the six months of inconclusive debate within the Supreme Soviet over the rate of economic reform.

Most of the regime's economists have totally given up on central planning, the source of their privileges and their political power. Instead they fantasise in endless articles and papers on the avalanche of prosperity the market would bring, if not to the whole USSR then to "their" republic, which is only held back by the "exploitation" of the centre.

Rump

A significant rump of the central bureaucracy, the KGB and the army obviously disagree with this, if for no other reason than that to dismantle the "central command economy" would mean dismantling their substantial salaries and their even more substantial access to villas, special shops, clinics and the perks of office.

However they are silent. They pack the benches of the Supreme Soviet, the CPSU Congress and Central Committee, watching the antics of the "reformers" with scarcely concealed distaste. But they have no alternative, no answer to the crisis.

Yet the reformers themselves have fallen into conflicting factions. The much heralded "Abalkin plan" was shelved at the last minute when the newly emerging workers' movement threatened to strike against any massive price increases. In its place has come the Shatalin plan.

This has already been accepted by Yeltsin and the Russian parliament. It envisages a 500 day rush towards capitalism. This will be accomplished in four stages:

- A stock exchange will be set up and the state industries and farms will be sold off to their workers and the populace to soak up the billions of roubles in savings, thereby solving the governemt's enormous debt crisis. The state will auction flats, construction projects and shops. it will end all subsidies to enterprises, allow farmers to withdraw from the collectives with land and the defence budget will be slashed
- The second stage will free prices, allowing them to "float". In fact they will rocket rather than float. Real wages will fall and thus the masses will pay the full costs of restoration.
- In the third stage, days 250 to 400 of the plan, 40% of industry, 50% of construction and transport and 60% of retail trade will be privatised. By day 500 Shatalin envisages 70% of industry in private hands.
- After this comes "the beginning of recovery". In an attempt to fend off workers' suspicions Shatalin assures them "world experience has proved in practice that the more developed market relations are, the lower the level of labour exploitation".

It is unlikely that the fifty millions unemployed predicted if the plan were carried out would agree with him. But just as the Russian media once pictured workers in the imperialist west living only in Dickensian conditions it now shows only the fattest portions of the labour aristocracy of America, Germany and Japan.

A capitalist USSR, reeling from 500 days of Shatalin, will not resemble California or West Germany but Mexico or Egypt.

The conservatives probably had enough deputies in the Supreme Soviet to vote down Shatalin's plan. Instead they, and many radicals with them, simply refused to turn up for the vote, rendering the meeting inquorate. In a farcical move the paralysed parliamentarians voted Gorbachev the power to introduce the market reforms.

Troubles

Despite all the radicals' desire for "constitutionalism" they have handed over the decision to a bureaucratic "strong man". Likewise the conservatives are prepared to pass the power to the originator of all their troubles.

Gorbachev has been given the power to rule by decree. Who will obey his decrees? His 1989 ban on strikes has been completely ignored. No-one tried to enforce it. He issued an order banning Armenian vigilantes from bearing arms. No one put down a single rifle. He banned demonstrations within a mile of the Kremlin. In September the Moscow Council led tens of thousands of Muscovites right past the Kremlin chanting "500 days yes! Ryzhkov No!"

What is the answer to this chronic paralysis? Will the USSR and the planned economy just fade away like the Cheshire cat, with Gorbachev left on the stage of world affairs like its smile?

No. It must pass through a revolutionary crisis in which a bureaucratic military crackdown, as well as successful workers revolution is a distinct possibility.

Coup

Moscow is already rife with rumours about a military coup. But at present any attempt to use the multinational Soviet Army to crush the republics would be suicidal for the top generals.

Far more likely is the crystallisation of an authoritarian pro-market trend around Gorbachev himself, using the already granted special powers, backed up by the most reliable organs of repression. It is certain that the Shatalin plan could only be pushed through by crushing the resistance of the workers whose jobs and livelihodds it would destroy.

At the moment crushing that resistance would be made easier by the misleadership of the new Confederation of Labour which has enormous illusions in the fast track to marketisation.

There is an acute crisis of leadership which can only be resolved by a revolutionary Trotskyist party and programme. This must set as its aim the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste that is restoring capitalism, taking the whole economy into the hands of the producers and consumers, giving the republics both the right to separate and the option of a truly equal federation of workers' states.

Such a Soviet federation would be able to democratically plan the use of the vast human and natural resources of the USSR. It could aid the workers of Europe, Asia and beyond in the struggle for power and help create a world of abundance and true democracy that would put capitalism into the museum of human history.■

Yuri Butchenko

ON 11 JULY Workers Power issued a statement on the Yuri Butchenko affair in which we stated that in a telephone call with Butchenko he informed us that his official invite papers to this country had been signed by George Miller, British representative of the right wing Russian organisation, the NTS. This was true. In the August issue of our newspaper we said that we only learnt that the official invite came from Miller when Butchenko actually arrived in Britain. This was a mistake.

It arose whilst attempting to put together an honest account of the Butchenko affair relying on the memories of translators and intermediaries.

Considerable confusion surrounds the bureaucratic procedures needed to get people from the USSR into this country. CSWEB itself had sought to get Labour MPs to issue such invitations to the independent Soviet miners' organisations.

We are only too happy to correct this simple mistake in our account. A variety of pro-Stalinist organisations, such as the Spartacists, have suggested that the discrepancy between our two versions of the "invite" means we were involved in some nefarious plot aimed at smearing Arthur Scargill and collaborating with imperialism's spy agencies. Having corrected the factual error we can only ask our accusers, what does this prove?

We stand by the political reasons for organising and then terminating the CSWEB tour.■

THE LONGEST WAR

"Inside this grim prison ..."

ACCORDING TO the Minister for Prisons in Northern Ireland, Crumlin Road Gaol is incident free and staff and facilities are utilised to keep contact and friction to a minimum. At about the same time as the Minister made his statement Crumlin Road was the scene of a vicious assault on republican prisoner Martin Molloy by four loyalists.

Early in May loyalist prisoners rioted, with forty inmates barricading themselves into a dining room while six prisoners gained access to the roof. they were protesting about integration of loyalist and republican prisoners.

This was only the latest in a series of incidents stretching back to 1976 when forced integration was first tried by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

Republican prisoners in the jail have repeatedly warned that the policy is placing their lives in jeopardy and should be abandoned immediately.

Crumlin Road is the only prison in Northern Ireland where a policy of forced intgegration is pursued. John Hall, spokesperson for the Prison Officers' Association, has admitted the implementation of the poicy is the result of a political decision by the British government and NIO rather than an internal policy of the prison administration.

Forced integration is one of the few remaining vestiges of the "criminalisation strategy" pursued by Britain since 1976; localising the conflict in Northern Ireland, gearing up the police and prison service to do the bulk of repressive work, stigmatising and treating the republican fighters as criminals or gangsters.

Most aspects of the strategy were wrecked by the 1981 hunger strikes.

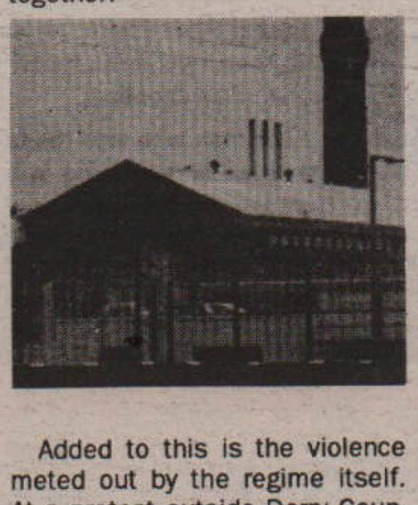
In Crumlin Road Gaol however the policy continues. Rooftop occupations, protests at remand courts, no slop-out protests, hunger strikes and cell-wreckings—all have failed to move the NIO.

There are four wings in the goal. Sentenced prisoners (all of whom are non-political) are held in D Wing. Republicans and loyalists have operated a system of self-imposed segregation which results in the halving of entitlement to the exercise yard and canteen association.

Danny Morrison, former Sinn Fein director of publicity and now on remand in Crumlin Road explains:

"It's easy to visualise how a fight can break out when, as in the case of republican remand prisoner Tommy Braniff, the loyalist charged with assassinating his father, is passing him every day. For three months I was in the cell next to that of the same loyalist who was charged with possessing RUC security files on my own movements."

Forced integration is used as a method of political control by the NIO. Political organisation within the prison system is frustrated by the threat to security embodied in the presence of loyalists alongside republican prisoners. As Crumlin Road governor John Semple put it, the integrated system "reduces the prospects for planning escapes from the prison in that loyalist and republican groups are highly unlikely to make escape plans together.



Added to this is the violence meted out by the regime itself. At a protest outside Derry Council, one republican prisoner's relative said "we have had to visit bruised and battered sons and husbands and have had their blood-stained clothes sent out to us on visits". The situation is serious and deteriorating.

Crumlin Road Gaol is more than just a symbol of British rule in Northern Ireland. It is a microcosm of the system of injustice and discrimination, with the state able to divide and rule, to repress the nationalists under the guise of even handednes and non-sectarianism, to use the loyalist paramilitaries as the unofficial arm of the state sure in the knowledge that as long as this system works protestant and catholic workers can be prevented from getting together to "escape" from that large prison house called the Orange State.■

READ

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AS IMPERIALISM BURIES GDR

New Trotskyist group formed!

ON 28 September in East Berlin, a new Trotskyist organisation, Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Ost) was founded. The political foundations of the group are the LRCI's programme, "The Trotskyist Manifesto" and the "Fundamental Principles of Our Programme". The group's foundation is the result of months of collaboration between comrades from the LRCI's West German, Austrian and British sections and East German revolutionaries.

FOR THE last year the greatest problem facing revolutionaries in the GDR (East Germany) has been how to oppose the Stalinist regime without playing into the hands of the West German imperialists.

The LRCI developed a strategy of political revolution that made no concessions to either Stalinism or imperialism but related to the urgent needs of the workers of the GDR as the crisis deepened. It is this programmatic clarity that has convinced the new group to declare itself in political solidarity with the LRCI and to seek recognition as a sympathising section.

The coming year will be no less fraught with political problems. The strategy of the West German imperialists has been to force through unity and to regain the territory of the GDR, irrespective of the cost. Any delay would have increased the likelihood of mass opposition, not only within the GDR but also the FRG (West Germany).

Nonetheless, the consequences of their hasty *Anschluss* are going to make themselves felt. Already, the FRG has had to accept the need for a third(!) budget which will see public sector borrowing grow to DM 150,000 million (roughly £50,000 million) and that is without the costs of the East German "State Trust" which is responsible for the still-nationalised industries of the "ex-GDR". In total the state debt in the FRG is now approaching DM one billion—approximately £330 million! Of course the intention is to make the workers of both "halves" of Germany pay the price, not only of this debt, but for restructuring the German economy.

Such a huge injection of cash into the German economy will encourage inflation unless it is held in check by a combination of lower wages and higher productivity within the economy as a whole. Soaring unemployment in the ex-GDR, with over 100,000 a month joining the dole queues, is the most immediate result of this. The rash of strikes and demonstrations during the summer, and the threat of a "hot autumn" convinced the Federal Government that it would have to take full control before risking the wholesale closure of the remaining state industries. This is the real purpose behind the bringing forward of the date for unification, but the full impact will not be felt until after the December elections have provided a government that can claim to represent the whole country.

Changes

The huge changes that have taken place in the past year have left the German working class without a coherent political leadership. By opposing immigration from the east, the SPD has discredited itself in both parts of the country. Its own recent unification is unlikely to establish it as a contender for government. In the ex-GDR its support appears to have dropped below 20% in the run up to the Landtag elections in mid-October. But it is by no means clear how the workers will respond to the collapse of the GDR. The south was most pro-unification in March but has also been hardest hit by the consequences. The "hero-city" of Leipzig now has 90,000 out of work.

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS, the old Stalinist party) has tried to complete its transformation into a western style social democratic party by sympathising with the plight of the unemployed. But it has not supported, much less encouraged, their direct mobilisation against closures.

Its aim, it says, is to be "a strong shield to protect the weak". Although this is a pathetic, and ultimately, utopian idea, the party's continuing identification as a workers' party has made it the principle pole of attraction to the left. Together with elements from the Greens and the smaller left currents, the PDS has formed the "Left List" to try to maximise its electoral support in the coming elections. A court ruling that GDR parties need only achieve 5% of the vote within the old GDR territory, not the whole Federal Republic, should ensure parliamentary seats for this unprincipled amalgam.

The comrades who have now formed the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Ost) have been extremely active within the GDR left. The September issue of *Arbeitermacht* sold 1,400 in its first week in Berlin. This work has brought more and more contacts from in and around the PDS and Left List. One group of workers involved in the factory committe of the PDS, for example, invited a speaker from the paper to take part in the recent conference on the economic situation organised by the party. More than 400 workers heard our comrade attack the "social market" programme of the PDS leaders in a speech which was reported in the party's daily paper, *Neues Deutschland*, the following day.

In the coming months the principal task of revolutionaries in both parts of Germany will be to intervene in this still very fluid left milieu around a programme that stresses the need for working class independence within the new state. In so doing they will forge the political and organisational basis for the foundation of an all-German organisation as the German section of the LRCI.■



The shape of things to come? An overturned van ablaze near Alexanderplatz, Berlin, 25 September

GREECE

General Strikes against austerity

THREE GENERAL strikes in as many weeks paralysed Greece in September. Over a million workers responded to the calls for two day stoppages by the Greek Labour federations. At the same time power, bank, public sector and munitions workers were on indefinite strike or occupying their workplaces.

Despite the daily 15 hour blackouts in Athens, the thousands of tons of uncollected rubbish, the absence of public transport and the growing food shortages, the majority of Greek workers remain solidly behind the strikes. They are well aware that, if the strikes are defeated, their fate will be a lot worse than the temporary discomfort caused by the action.

The right wing government, New Democracy, came to power in April this year. Its leader, Constantine Mitsotakis, promised a vicious austerity package. In a phrase stolen from his idol Margaret Thatcher, he declared, "we must understand that we cannot live beyond our means". No, this did not mean that the fabulously rich Onassis family would be called on to sell up their islands and mansions. But it did mean that workers were going to be made to pay for Greek capitalism's massive crisis.

Mitsotakis is presiding over the poorest economy within the European Community. Inflation is now 22%. The foreign debt stands at £12 billion with a budget deficit for 1989 of £6.8 billion.

To deal with these problems New Democracy set out to:

- abolish the index linked wages, that had provided some protection against inflation; cut social security benefits
- raise the retirement age and the level of workers' contributions to pensions whilst cutting pensions themselves
- sack workers in nationalised industries.

To undermine opposition to these attacks the government prepared anti-union laws to introduce compulsory strike ballots and the right to legally penalise workers who took strike action.

British workers will recognise the unmistakably Thatcherite character of this austerity package. But the Greek working class has given us a good lesson in how to react to such attacks. Their determined action has plunged the government into panic. The austerity package was passed in Parliament by one vote—the government's working majority—but the strikes went on. And the government is now openly divided, with a number of ministers desperate to open negotiations with the unions and ready to concede on aspects of the austerity package. This despite New Democracy's Thatcher style rhetoric about taming the unions and making no U-turns!

Working class action, organised on a class wide basis, not shrinking back from the need to defy the courts and defeat the riot squads has put the government on the defensive. British workers should take note and prepare to deal with Thatcher in the same way, particularly as she makes ready for a new round of attacks called for by Britain's recession.

But Greek workers still face problems with traitors in their own ranks, just as we do with the TUC and the Labour Party. The "socialists" of Pasok and the Stalinists in the Communist Party are busy declaring support for the strikes today. Yet less than a year ago the Stalinists were in a coalition with the right wing New Democracy. And before that the Pasok government had itself been trying to attack the index-linked wage system and social security!

Within the three union federations the leaders who support these traitors are doing all they can to control the strike wave. They have deliberately restricted the general strikes to two days, despite the willingness of thousands of workers to come out indefinitely. And, as the government's resolve began to crack, the union leaders held out the prospect of resolving the crisis through separate settlements that would leave many workers still victim to the effects of the austerity package.

To avoid this terrible waste and betrayal of the Greek workers' militancy the struggle must be developed into an indefinite general strike to smash the austerity package and the anti-union laws.■



WHAT REALLY lies behind the recent violence in South Africa? 1990 has witnessed ferocious violence, especially in the townships, leading to 2,300 deaths, 740 in the last two months alone.

The western media has been quick to exploit the fact that this violence stems from the conflicts between black factions; the ANC and Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha. It is portrayed as tribal (Xhosa versus Zulu) and shamelessly used to plug the racist message that blacks cannot be trusted to run a civilised society.

In fact the apartheid state deliberately created the divisions between the Zulus and the Xhosa and fostered Inkatha as a right wing black organisation that could act as a counterweight to the ANC. The terrible violence in the townships is the direct responsibility of the apartheid system.

It is becoming more evident by the day that white right wingers and whites within the police and armed forces are fomenting and executing the violence. While Inkatha is not directly linked to the forces of white reaction, evidence is emerging of collaboration between these sinister forces aimed at breaking the ANC's mass base through terror. The weight of evidence pointing to such involvement by pro-apartheid whites has become so great that De Klerk himself has felt obliged to order an independent inquiry into the allegations.

But at the same time he is quite prepared to use the tried and trusted methods of apartheid repression against the black population.

Operation Iron Fist was launched last month to crack down on the violence. Needless to say while there have been arrests of Inkatha members it is ANC supporters who have borne the brunt of the police offensive.■

CAMBODIA

UN: friends of Pol Pot

EAGER TO earn their places at the top table of the "new world order", the USSR and China played a key role in ending Cambodia's eleven year civil war. At the UN Security Council in August they voted for a peace plan involving a UN overseen ceasefire, an interim government comprising all of the conflicting forces and elections designed to establish an independent and neutral Cambodian government.

It all sounds very fair. It fits in with the promises of a new era of peace that Bush, Gorbachev and others prattle about in their television speeches. And after all doesn't Cambodia deserve to be given a break after the horrors it has suffered for the past twenty years?

Don't believe a word of it! The imperialists and the Stalinist leaders want to tie up the loose ends in Indochina. US imperialism brutally raped the region in the 1960s and early 1970s. After its defeat in 1975 the projects of the mutually hostile Stalinists in Vietnam and Cambodia to build "socialism in one country" led to Pol Pot's killing fields, a Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, a brief Chinese-Vietnam war and interminable civil war within Cambodia itself.

Invaded

In 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia and overthrew the murderous Pol Pot regime. The Vietnamese Stalinists were not acting in an internationalist fashion as their apologists claim. They had long sought to dominate Indochina and installing a pro-Vietnamese regime in Phnom Penh (Cambodia's capital) was their principal objective. The government of Heng Samrin, and now of Hun Sen, Cambodia's prime minister, was the result.

Until last September this regime was defended by a massive Vietnamese army. Ranged against it was a coalition comprising Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, Son Sann's bourgeois Khmer People's Liberation Front and Prince Norodom Sihanouk's National Army. Despite the presence of the Khmer Rouge, the imperialists and China backed this coalition. It was the lesser evil to the Soviet/Vietnamese backed regime in Phnom Penh.

With Gorbachev's global retreat it was inevitable that Cambodia would be sacrificed to the imperialists at the negotiating table. For its part Vietnam, dependent to a large extent on Soviet aid, was prepared to go along with negotiations aimed at a settlement that would, eventually, mean the return of Pol Pot's butchers. And since their troops were withdrawn, Pol Pot's fighters, the best armed and organised faction within the coalition, have made headway in their guerrilla campaign.

The Hun Sen regime could not win this war. The drain on the economy was crippling, with 30% of the state budget going on defence. Inflation was rampant—200% this year. The country's vital agricultural sector was severely dislocated by the civil war, with some 150,000 people displaced from fertile land by the fighting.

These circumstances, combined with the USSR and Vietnam's willingness to co-operate in the imperialist's plans for the country, opened the door to the UN peace plan and to the acceptance of it by the opposition coalition and the Phnom Penh regime.

Balance

Cambodia's fate now hangs in the balance. The interim government, the Supreme National Council, is made up of six of Hun Sen's representatives and two each from the other opposition factions. It is currently under debate as to whether or not Sihanouk himself should chair the Council as its 13th member. But the real power struggle is unlikely to be determined on the Council

Civil war is still raging. Even with UN forces in the country it will continue. With an estimated $10 billion and 20,000 military and administrative personnel needed to implement the peace plan, there is every chance that it will collapse before any elections.

This is a graphic illustration of why the UN can never be a force for justice. All the plan agreed by the imperialists, the USSR and China has achieved, is to legitimise the conflicting factions' claims to use Cambodia as they see fit. Each faction will use the terms of the peace plan to further their own reactionary projects. The long suffering Cambodian masses will be the ones to pay the price.

So much for the healing powers of the "new world order". In a land torn by war it can only sow the seeds of renewed conflict. In the name of peace it has reinstalled into the interim government Pol Pot's most notorious hatchet man, Son Sen, along with Khieu Samphan, the architect of the economic policies that led to at least a million deaths during the Khmer Rouge's reign. And if either the playboy Prince or the pro-US Son Sann get their way, Cambodia will become one more field for plunder by the ASEAN states and imperialist Japan.■

THE GULF CRISIS

What kind of anti-war movement ?

BY CLARE HEATH

AT PRESENT there are no fewer than three national campaigns against the Gulf War. On three successive Saturdays in September there were demonstrations in London against the war, each called by different elements within the anti-war movement, each then boycotted by other sections. Added to this one of the largest sections of the British left, the supporters of *Militant*, have steadfastly ignored the demonstrations and campaigns against the Gulf crisis.

All this reflects the fragmented character of the British left. But whilst part of the antics can be explained by the sectarian desires of some left groups to outmanoeuvre other left groups, there are important political questions underlying the divided nature of the anti-war movement.

The Campaign Against War in Gulf (CAWG) has called a Conference Against the War in the hope of unifying the movement. This conference will need to tackle the key question of what the basis for unity should be.

Many on the left, including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Action*, argue that the important thing is to build the biggest single campaign possible in opposition to the war.

Each of these organisations themselves argues that the way British workers should oppose the war is to call for the withdrawal of British and US forces from the Gulf, but are keen to unite with others who simply want to stop the war.

It is correct to try and win unity with the broadest possible sections of the working class and labour movement around any action which will impede the imperialist war drive. At the moment a demonstration which is called on the basis of Stop the War is an action hostile to Thatcher's plans. If millions of workers could be brought to such a demonstration it would be a real deterrent to her continued pumping of resources into the war drive.

But opposition to the war alone is not enough as the basis for a campaign which we try to win workers to. This is because behind the Stop the War banner will stand not only those who want to get imperialist troops out of the Gulf in order to foil the US plans to strengthen its ability to exploit the Middle East, but also those who want to secure the aims of the US forces, without resorting to use of arms.

Having raised the call to Stop the War, the question begged is how? Ken Livingstone for example is against the war, but argues vociferously in favour of sanctions to bring Saddam Hussein to heel. His way of stopping the war would be tighter sanctions like that, are so determined to retain the worthies from the Labour left, the unions, CND, and the Greens within the movement that they dare not demand the right to raise their own positions from the platform. They fear that more of their famous friends will do a Bruce Kent and pull out because someone dared to raise the slogan of "Troops out of the Gulf".

The broadest possible workers' united front must be built to stop the imperialists in the Gulf. A united front must be based on united action, and in this case that has to be any and every action to obstruct the military, economic and political intervention of the imperialists.

Above all action is needed to get British and US troops out, and that is exactly the kind of action which will send Bruce Kent, the Greens and Plaid Cymru fleeing from the campaign.

A united campaign is needed, and the existence of the Ad Hoc Committee for Hands off the Gulf and the Campaign Against War in the Gulf, both of which are based on anti-imperialist slogans, is ridiculous. Workers Power is affiliated to both and actively working for them to unite on specific actions and to create a single anti-imperialist campaign at the conference in November.

If we lose the arguments decisively for a broad anti-imperialist campaign in the workers' organisations, then we will work within a pacifist Stop the War movement, so long as it does not adopt a pro-sanctions position, and continue to fight for it to adopt the position of Troops Out.

At every possible opportunity we would raise calls for action to get the troops out, and demand the right to put our position forward at all rallies, demonstrations and meetings against the war. But at present the fight in the labour movement has only just begun.

The accommodating lefts around the SWP, *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Action* are content to be the anti-imperialist left wing of the peace movement, if Kent and Livingstone will let them in. But if their past and present practice is anything to go by they will be a very loyal opposition. So loyal that they will hide their slogans, set up platforms of pro-UN speakers, refuse to call for decisive workers action against the troops—anything rather than split the pacifist "broad front".

Their adaptation to the pacifist forces will not result in a bigger movement within which they can then win the anti-imperialist argument. It will lead to a weakening of the forces of anti-imperialism arguing clearly within the working class for troops out. And when the shooting war starts, the peace movement will fly apart, leaving the anti-imperialists standing alone in working for the defeat of Thatcher and her imperialist allies.

That is why we have to build an anti-imperialist working class orientated movement against the Gulf War drive now—not give up before we've even started.■



Popular front on the march: left to right; Ken Cameron, Tony Benn, Marjorie Thompson (CND), Plaid Cymru and the Greens—every one supports the sanctions

Socialist disunity

BY COLIN LLOYD

SOCIALIST ACTION and *Socialist Outlook* both proclaim their support for the politics of the same organisation, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI). Their supporters would all claim to solidarise with the positions of this International.

In mid-September a prominent supporter of *Socialist Action*, Carol Turner, led a successful witch-hunt within the pacifist Committee Against War in the Gulf to get a representative of the anti-imperialist Campaign Against War in the Gulf (CAWG) unceremoniously thrown out of a meeting.

Astonishingly, the persecuted CAWG includes amongst its leading sponsors none other than *Socialist Outlook*.

The witch-hunting of one British set of supporters of the USFI by the other is just one more example of the USFI's abandonment of the struggle to build a democratic centralist International. An International united by a common programme and organised on a democratic centralist basis would debate and decide upon the necessary course of action on how to build an anti-imperialist movement. Then supporters in each country would act in a unified way to take the democratically agreed position into the working class. So what has the USFI done?

Look in the pages of *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Action* and you will find virtually identical statements on the Gulf crisis. There is one disagreement on whether revolutionaries should continue to call for Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in the face of the massive build up of imperialist troops in the area. Otherwise the two journals closely follow the position laid down by the Paris-based international leadership of the USFI on 6 September. This statement is principled, calling for working class opposition to the imperialist war drive, and clearly states the USFI's willingness to side with Iraq against imperialism in the event of war.

Does it follow from this that the USFI acts in a revolutionary way? No. *Socialist Action* are actively working to exclude the left from the pacifist Committee. They are refusing to argue for troops out, claiming it would be divisive. That is, it would divide them from the pro-sanctions, pro-UN sections of the Labour "left" such as Livingstone with whom they are desperate to maintain a cosy pact. The question of how to actually oppose the imperialists' war drive is conveniently forgotten.

Apart from the Communist Party, *Socialist Action* supporters are the only section of the left to be allowed access to the privileged inner circle which runs the pacifist committee. They have forcefully argued against raising the demand for imperialist troops out of the Gulf, and have prevented others from putting this forward.

On the 15 September demonstration one leading *Socialist Action* supporter is reported to have ordered a Middle Eastern comrade with a Troops Out placard to move from near the front of the march and join the SWP contingent. When he refused the police were asked to move him. When the state refused to oblige the *Socialist Action* "comrade' forcibly took the placard from the man, according to a witness of the event.

Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* have not taken their opportunism to such extremes and have remained within the anti-imperialist CAWG committee, although arguing for unity with the pacifists on the basis of "Stop the War". They have though, in contrast to their brothers and sisters in *Socialist Action*, continued to argue the need for anti-imperialist contingents on joint demonstrations. This has led to public slanging matches at weekly meetings of CAWG by two sets of people supposedly bound together by their common support for the USFI!

This series of sordid escapades is a classic example of centrism. In the pages of their journals both *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Action* have a formally revolutionary position on the Gulf. But this position is not intended to guide them to consistent revolutionary action in their practical opposition to the war. Their actions on the ground merely demonstrate varying shades of adaptation to Labour lefts and pacifists.

***Socialist Action*'s recent promotion to the job of witch-hunter general on behalf of the pacifists reveals just how low centrism can sink—adopting Stalinist methods to silence opponents of their popular front friends. It should also serve as a warning to those who believe the occasionally correct statements of the USFI make it a revolutionary or even reformable International. The USFI's "theses" bear little relationship to its supporters' practice. Their public squabbles and tailing after the pacifists and left reformists reveal the real character of this International—bankrupt!■**

THE GULF CRISIS

Get active!

Demonstrate

BLACKPOOL
Thursday 4 October 12 noon
Lobby of Labour Party Conference
Imperialist troops out of the Gulf!
Break bi-partisan support for war and sanctions!

LONDON
Wednesday 10 October 6pm
Torchlit demonstration called by Hands off the Middle East Committee
Assemble Marble Arch (by the Arch itself)

LONDON
Saturday 24 November
Stop the War Demonstration
Called by Stop the War Committee
Build an anti-imperialist contingent calling for:
US-British troops out of the Gulf
No sanctions—no blockade

In the event of military action demonstrate from 5pm onwards:

LONDON
US Embassy Grosvenor Square
Contact your local anti-war committee for details of venues outside London

Conference

Conference against War in the Gulf
Sunday 4 November
Labour Movement conference organised by Campaign Against War in the Gulf, sponsored by Workers Power
Send delegates from all trade unions, Labour Parties, student unions, local anti-war committees. Pass this resolution:

This _____ believes there is a need for a united campaign against imperialist intervention in the Gulf.
This _____ resolves to sponsor the Conference Against War in the Gulf on Sunday 4 November, to send delegates and the following motion:
This conference resolves to found a united anti-imperialist campaign against the imperialist intervention in the Gulf based on the following slogans:
Stop the war!
US-British troops out of the Gulf!
No sanctions—break the blockade!
This conference resolves to elect a steering committee from the delegates present to run the national campaign.

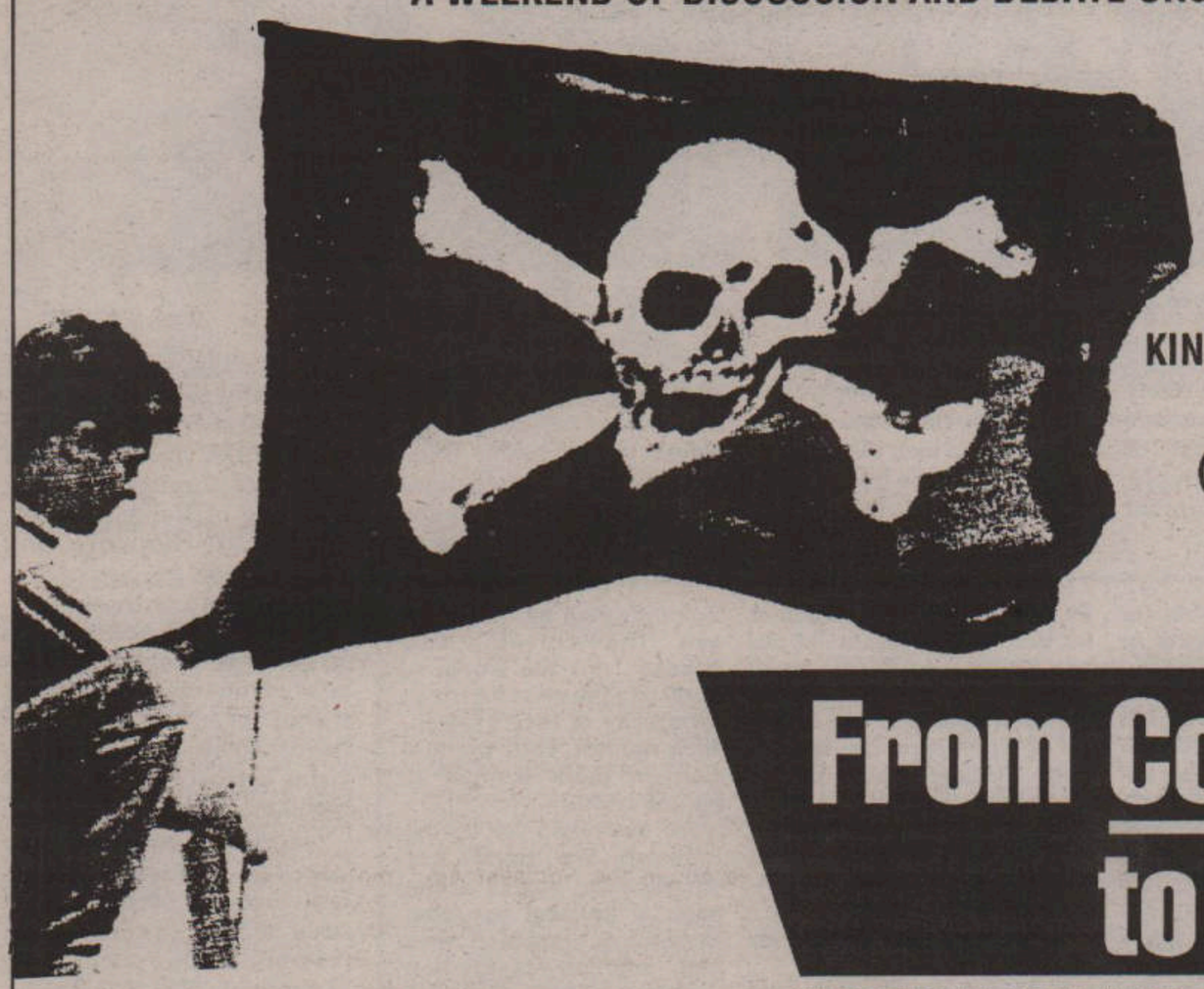
Debate and discussion
Saturday 13 October
52 Featherstone St London
Women only forum on the Gulf Crisis
Organised by Women for Socialism

Workers Power Public Meetings
Imperialist Troops Out of the Gulf!
London: Thursday 18 October 7.30
London School of Economics

James Connolly—a Marxist analysis
Cardiff: Wednesday October 24 Hotel Diplomat 7.30

PERMANENT REVOLUTION 90

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE ORGANISED BY WORKERS POWER



17-18 NOVEMBER
KINGSWAY PRINCETON COLLEGE, SIDMOUTH STREET, (NEAR KINGS CROSS) LONDON

From Cold War to Gulf War

IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

US airman shows his true colours

Courses include: The Middle East Today ● Counter-revolution in Eastern Europe? ● The Politics of Workers Power ● Trotsky's Legacy ● The British Labour Movement Today ● Tickets: Weekend £10 (£4 conc.), Day £6 (£3) ● Send cheques (payable to Workers Power) to: Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX ● Creche will be available

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!

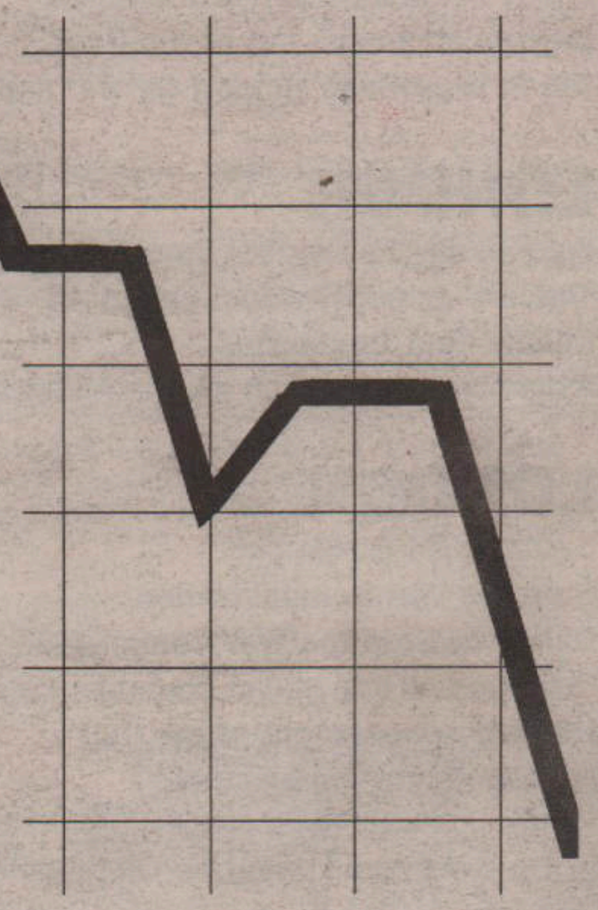
workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

- USSR—500 days to go?
- Poll Tax struggle in the courts
- Greek general strikes

WORLD RECESSION LOOMS



WORKERS MUST NOT PAY!

WHAT'S IN a word? A lot if that word happens to be recession. The world's capitalist overlords are terrified of uttering this word. At every opportunity they have done their best to talk down any suggestion that their world economic system is teetering on the edge of a major recession.

Yet the facts speak for themselves. The north east of the USA is stuck firmly in a recession. The car industry in particular is slashing production and laying off workers by their thousands. The construction sector across the whole of the USA has hit had its worst year since 1982.

In the last three months the output of goods and services in the USA has been scraping along at an annual rate of 1.2%. Unemployment is at its highest for two years at 5.5%.

Britain is in even worse shape. Last month Chancellor Major told the world's leading bankers that things were bad and likely to get worse. And most Tories, despite their perfumed phrases in public, privately admit that the next six months will witness further decline. Britain's economy is in recession.

The engineering bosses have announced job cuts totalling 80,000. More factory closures will follow those like the Laura Ashley plants in Wales. And the CBI has issued its gloomiest predictions for industry since the early 1980s.

The service sector, which has seen its biggest expansion ever in recent years, will be particularly badly hit by redundancies.

Who is to blame for these economic woes?

It would be very convenient to make Saddam Hussein the scapegoat. He can easily be portrayed as the cause of the oil price rises and their knock on effect throughout industry.



The future looks none too good for these oil traders

The bosses' press is already adding capitalism's economic difficulties to his list of crimes. This is, quite simply, a lie. Even the *Financial Times* admitted:

"From an economic point of view . . . the euphoria that greeted the new decade was beginning to look tarnished . . . well before the Iraqi President launched his tanks against Kuwait." (24.9.9)

The breakdown in the eight year long cyclical upturn of the world economy began before the summer. Everywhere, with the exception of West Germany, company profits had been falling and investment plans had been drastically pruned.

The recovery that followed the 1979-82 recession was sustained through the vast spending of Reagan's USA, funded by Germany and Japan

Today both of these countries are far less able to act as Uncle Sam's bankers. Japanese companies have found money for invest and banks have their own problems with rising intrest rates and falling shares.

Germany—once keen to lend the USA money—has been forced to borrow money itself to pay the huge cost ($54 billion this year alone) of annexing East Germany.

All of this means that the international co-operation which regulated the world economy, and was essential to prolonging the years of recovery, is breaking up. All that is in question is just how deep the world recession will be.■

WORKERS PAID a heavy price during the last recession. In Britain's manufacturing industries hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost as factory after factory closed.

Thatcher declared that there was no alternative and that her monetarist medicine would eventually result in a bright and prosperous future.

As inflation rises, as industry's orders dry up, as the factories again switch to short time working or prepare for closure, as the dole queues once again begin to swell, her lies about capitalism's fairness stand exposed. Capitalism is a system of crisis. And crisis means misery, insecurity and poverty for the working class.

As the bosses decide that it is no longer profitable for them to take on workers or keep up their existing workforces we will hear familiar arguments and lame old excuses about the crisis: blame the Arabs for the energy price rises; blame workers' wages for high inflation; blame unemployment on wage rises "pricing workers out of their jobs"; accept voluntary redundancies or even wage cuts to keep factories open.

All of this is rubbish. As the recession deepens workers must reject the lies of the bosses. Their proposals to deal with the crisis will try to divide and weaken our ranks, pitting skilled against unskilled, black against white, male against female, employed against unemployed.

By these means they will hope to get away with their plant closures, redundancies and wage cuts. We must not let this happen. We must not pay for their crisis. We must close ranks and fight for a workers' answer to the crisis.

For eight years the bosses have amassed vast profits thanks to our labour. We won't be cast off like used clothes now that their system is in crisis. Militant direct action—strikes and occupations—must be the starting point for our resistance.

But on its own, as the defeats of the 1980s showed, this is not enough. We need a political alternative, fought for in the daily struggle, that challenges capitalism itself.

In the face of closures and redundancies we must fight for nationalisation under workers' control and with no compensation to the bosses, for work or full pay and for the hours of the working week to be controlled by the workers themselves. The bosses', not the workers, must pay the price for the irrationality of their system, their market, their production for profit instead of human need.

In the face of rising inflation we must not sacrifice our wages in the hope of keeping our jobs. Recession combined with high inflation—stagflation—demands that we protect wages, not company profits. As well as establishing a strictly guaranteed minimum wage, based on the current average industrial wage, we need a 1% rise for every 1% rise in inflation, with the inflation rate determined by workers' price watch committees not by the figure rigging government.■