

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Hands Off the Middle East Conference

10am Sunday 17 March
Red Rose Club, Finsbury Park, London
Details 071 375 2697

Nalگو Broad Left Conference

"Fight the Tory Poll Tax, Not the Tory War"
Saturday 16 March
William Collins School, London
Details c/o 220 Chamberlayne Rd London
NW10

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

DEFEND IRAQ! DEFEAT IMPERIALISM!

The new world order...

PEACE OFFERS were cast aside. Bombs and missiles fell like rain on Iraq. Propaganda poured out of the television screens and newspapers to convince everyone that Bush and Major were making the world safe for democracy.

When this careful preparation for the desert bloodbath was completed the forces of the coalition blasted their way into Kuwait and Southern Iraq. Tanks and troops from eleven countries were hurled at the Iraqi defences. Labour dutifully lined up behind the Tories to endorse the attack, not only on Kuwait but on Southern Iraq. They were as eager as the worst Tory warmonger to turn the taps of the bloodbath on full.

The war aim of "liberating Kuwait" was revealed for the lie it always was. Imperialism is intent on smashing Iraq and impos-

ing a bloody imperialist peace on the entire region.

Rich in oil and strategically vital, the region has long been a prized possession for the so called "great powers". France and Britain ruled the Gulf directly for as long as they could. When they pulled out of the area they had carved it up into a series of artificial states with borders designed to suit the drilling missions of the oil companies, not the national interests of the Arabs. They installed dictators and unelected emirs to act as their local stooges.

It was not Saddam's record as a dictator, or his alleged atrocities in Kuwait that bothered our rulers. The imperialist world leaders sleep soundly every night, undisturbed by the atrocities they themselves authorise in Panama or Northern Ireland. Until August they were paying and arming Saddam

Hussein, and dictators like him, to murder and torture workers so as to keep order in the Middle East.

What upset the imperialists was that Saddam had created instability in the region. And the threat to profits that this posed, not the threat to life, was what made them determined to strike him down.

Our aim too is to strike down Saddam and the Ba'ath elite. But it is the job of the Iraqi workers and peasants to do this. If the allies, or some Iraqi general, fulfil this task it will be no victory for democracy.

The allies' real war aims have always been the subjugation of the peoples of the Middle East to the will of Washington and Wall Street. A victory for the coalition will mean that the Iraqi people can, at best, look forward to life under a devastated economy and a new dictator more amenable

to the west's interests. At worst, the Iraqis will, along with the masses of all the other countries in the region, face permanent military occupation by the victors.

There will be other victims too. The Kurds and the Palestinians will continue to be denied a homeland under an imperialist "peace settlement". The masses of North Africa, whose hatred of imperialism has brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets during the war, will face the prospect of US intervention if they try to overthrow their corrupt pro-imperialist rulers.

A gun at the head of the masses of the Middle East. That is the meaning of the new world order the allies are fighting for.

Even in the imperialist countries a victory for the coalition will be a defeat for the workers. Bush and Major will use their victory



parades at home to herald a new round of the war against the "enemy within". The working class will face new attacks on jobs, wages, services and democratic rights as the recession bites.

The war is an imperialist war. It is being waged by and for the profiteers. It has nothing to do with the "liberation of Kuwait" and everything to do with the subordination of Iraq and the whole Middle East. Victory for imperialism

means defeat for us. Victory to Iraq could thwart their plans, could set back their grab for cheap oil and military domination.

By the time you read this the war may be in its final stages. Then all those who have fought against this imperialist war must turn to the vital task of fighting the imperialist peace.

- Defend Iraq!
- Defeat imperialism!
- Imperialist troops out of the Middle East now!

Gulf Crisis pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and centre pages

What Workers Power fights for

WE ARE for maximum unity in action for any goal that weakens imperialism's ability to wage war.

The campaign that needs to be built should be based on the working class because only the working class has the power to take the action that can stop the war. It should be based on:

- Stop the war against Iraq,
- Imperialist troops out,
- Defence of Arabs and Muslims against racist attack, detention and deportation.

We will not split from a campaign that refuses to fight for this. We will struggle within local and national campaigns. Experience shows that it is the Stalinists and the CND liberals who will split from the campaign, who will sabotage unity at the first whiff of workers' anti-imperialist action.

Unlike the SWP, we will not use this as an excuse not to fight for anti-imperialist goals within the peace committees. Our goal is to win these committees, and the workers' organisations within them, away from the leadership of the pro-sanctions CNDers. If the middle class pacifists split because they cannot stomach united action against the imperialist war aims and the reactionary peace then we won't shed any tears.

We will continue to participate fully in every local anti-war committee. Whilst many are democratically run there are also many where decisions are taken in back rooms between local Stalinists and the SWP, including decisions about who is allowed to affiliate. Even where Workers Power is bureaucratically excluded under these arrangements we will fight for workers' organisations to affiliate and send our supporters as delegates.

As regards the national CSWG we urge all workers' organisations affiliated to it to send delegates, fight for the right to vote within it and argue for dropping the "Four Points" and support for the demand of "Troops Out".

In several local committees the call has already been raised for a delegate conference of CSWG to agree its aims and a democratic structure. The petty intrigue of the past month shows the vital need for this.

Nowhere do we make it a condition of unity in action that workers and youth agree with our demand for "Victory to Iraq". We participate in the Hands Off the Middle East Committee (HOME), which is committed to imperialism's defeat and an Iraqi victory, to maximise the effect of those forces who take this revolutionary stance.

Whilst we have marched with HOME contingents on the anti-war demonstrations behind the banner "Victory to Iraq", we are fully prepared to build anti-imperialist contingents around the slogan "Troops Out". It is the rest of the left that refuses even to organise itself into such contingents.

But we will fight for our right to raise the slogan "Victory to Iraq", against the police and the coppers' narks who run CND. ■

ANTI-IMPERIALIST ACTION



HOME contingent 2 February

Sue Denholm/Living Marxism

No police censorship!

ON THE Stop the War Demo in London on 2 February one person was arrested and several others threatened with arrest for chanting slogans and holding banners which the police objected to.

The Hands off the Middle East Committee (HOME) attempted to carry a banner bearing the slogan Victory to Iraq! Those carrying it were threatened with arrest under the Public Order Act and were eventually forced to take the banner down. Alastair Green, a supporter of the Spartacist League was arrested for chanting the same slogan and has been charged with "obstructing a police officer" and "threatening behaviour".

On 20 February eleven people were arrested as Black Workers Against War in the Gulf staged a protest against the detention and deportation of Iraqis and Palestinians.

The picket, which had received police permission, was met by a small, low-key police presence. A group of demonstrators raised the chant "US murderers out of the Gulf". Seconds later an officer rushed across the road to threaten them with arrest if they did not desist from using this "offensive" slogan. It was soon agreed that the picket as a whole would adopt the chant.

Minutes later, a fleet of eight riot-equipped vans arrived on the scene. While a senior officer read out an obscure "sessional order", dating from 1839, demanding the picket disperse within two minutes, more than 100 police surrounded the 50 or so demonstrators. The police proceeded to rip

down crash barriers and steamed into the heart of the crowd with fists and boots flying.

Among those taken into custody and charged were staff from the Newham Monitoring Project, the convenor of the NUS London region, Hossein Zahir, supporters of the Troops Out Movement and Asian author, Amrit Wilson. Most face trial for alleged offences under the Public Order Act at Horseferry Magistrates Court. In addition, a German woman attending the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, was arrested and charged with possession of an offensive weapon—a tiny gas cannister commonly used by women for self-defence. The threat of deportation now looms over her.

From police comments during both incidents it is clear that the Director of Public Prosecutions has issued a "proscribed list" of banned slogans for the duration of the war.

Britain, of course, "has no political censorship". But the police have been given the green light to arrest those challenging imperialism for causing a "breach of the peace". What hypocrisy. When American planes murder civilians in their bomb shelters they are "defending democracy". When black people call this murder in public they are "breaching the peace"!

The CND leaders aided and abetted the police on 2 February. They called the police after their ageing Stalinist stewards failed in their own attempt to remove the HOME banner. Their friends on the *Guardian* and *Tribune* have stirred up a witch-hunt against

anti-imperialists within the campaign.

Everybody in the anti-war movement should protest against the police attack on democratic rights. Repression always begins with the most consistent anti-imperialists, but it seldom stops at that. With every minor victory it grows stronger.

A slogan which provoked no police response on a mass demon-

stration of mainly white peace activists provoked a brutal assault when raised on a small, militant picket of black people.

HOME has set up a Defence Fund for all those arrested as a result of police provocation and harassment. It is calling on activists to defend the democratic rights of all tendencies within the anti-war movement from CND witch-hunts and police censorship. ■

Pass this resolution:

This _____ believes that all anti war organisations and individuals should have the right to fight for political slogans free from police harassment, censorship and arrest.

This _____ notes the arrest of one anti-war activist on the Feb 2 London demonstration, charged under the Public Order Act, for shouting the slogan Victory to Iraq.

We note also the repeated threat of arrest on this demonstration for others shouting this slogan or carrying banners and placards with this slogan on.

This _____ resolves to defend the right of all anti-war activists to raise such slogans, whether we agree with them or not. We resolve:

a) to contribute £___ to the defence fund set up by Hands Off the Middle East Committee which will provide for legal costs of any anti-war demonstrator arrested as a result of police

attempts to censor, harass and repress the anti-war movement

b) to forward this resolution to all labour movement and anti-war organisations we are affiliated to

c) to defend anti-war protesters against police repression on demonstrations, pickets etc

d) to call on the DPP to drop all charges against those arrested on such demonstrations.

Make cheques payable to Hands Off the Middle East (Defence Fund)
c/o BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX
Tel 071 375 2697

Messages of support etc.to:

Black People Against War in the Gulf: c/o Newham Monitoring Project, 382, Katherine Road, Forest Gate, London E7

Alastair Green: c/o Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX

Anti-war movement: What price unity?

THE COMMITTEE to Stop War in the Gulf (CSWG), Britain's "official" anti-war movement, came close to breaking up last month. With their eyes on the prize of a split in the Labour leadership, CND and the Stalinists who run the Committee moved to expel the anti-imperialists.

CSWG existed for five months with the single slogan of "Stop the War". This allowed both pro- and anti-imperialist groups to take part in its actions. The onset of the war itself and the imminence of the bloody ground war led the pro-imperialists, worried about their campaign being discredited through links with the left, to try and shatter this unity.

At a chaotic national meeting on Monday 11 February, Communist Party of Britain (CPB) leader Mike Hicks presented CSWG with "15 Points". Anybody who refused to sign them should get out, he argued. Since the 15 Points included support for UN sanctions and the call for Iraq out of Kuwait this would have excluded the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and several other left groups who had managed to get delegates to CSWG.

MPs Bernie Grant and Jeremy Corbyn led an occupation of the meeting room to stop the exclusion of the left delegates. In response Hicks and CND leader Marjorie Thompson reconvened the meeting elsewhere, passed the 15 Points and issued an ultimatum to the left to get out.

By the next weekly meeting, however, pressure from the Labour left MPs, and the realisation that the SWP provides the backbone of CSWG at a local level, prompted the CND leaders to compromise. Unity was restored by all parties agreeing to campaign around "Four Points":

- An immediate ceasefire and the convening of a Middle East peace conference leading to a sustainable comprehensive settlement;
- Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and the Coalition forces from the region;
- The rejection of calls for victory by either Iraq or the USA;



- The withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and ensuring the rights of all people in the region to self-determination.

This peace settlement has allowed the SWP to keep its seat at the top table of the anti-war movement and is a clear retreat from the attempt to exclude anti-sanctions groups. For its part, the SWP has agreed to the Four Points despite the fact that it is against Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and, on paper, is in favour of victory to Iraq.

What lessons should anti-war campaigners draw from this series of squabbles and backroom deals?

From the start of the Gulf crisis Workers Power has argued for an anti-imperialist campaign to be built within the working class. We are prepared to unite with anybody, in all specific actions that concretely help obstruct the war. But when it comes to building a united working class campaign we want one committed to ending the war in a progressive way. At a minimum this means calling for imperialist troops to get out of the region and resisting the call for sanctions.

The logic of opposing the imperialist presence is to support the defeat of the imperialist troops and the victory of Iraq. But we do not make these slogans preconditions for united action. Workers, even those who support sanctions, can be won to action against the war despite their disagreement with our slogans.

What we do demand of all sections of the anti-war movement is that, just as the SWP and the CPB should

have the right to raise their slogans, we should be afforded that same right. Yet because we have dared to raise our slogan of "Victory to Iraq" publicly on demonstrations we have been attacked by the police and CND supporters, slandered as both Saddam supporters and CIA agents (!) and, in CSWG's Four Points, specifically excluded from the anti-war campaign. So much for democracy!

Whenever we have tried to commit anti-war campaigns to anti-imperialist goals like "Imperialist Troops Out" and "No to Sanctions" we have been accused of needlessly splitting the movement. From Tony Benn to the SWP and *Socialist Organiser*, our opponents have insisted that "Stop the War" is the only basis for an anti-war movement. To go beyond this is sectarian and prevents maximum unity, they say.



The whole experience of the vicious feud within CSWG proves the opposite.

For five months before the war began "Stop the War" was the flag of convenience under which the anti-sanctions left united with the pro-sanctions Labour, Stalinist and CND-led peace movement. Both sides consciously avoided excluding each other by never insisting on any other slogan as the basis of the campaign.

This did not stop the constituent organisations who supported sanctions (all of them except the SWP) from campaigning for sanctions as the way to stop war. As we have now seen sanctions were not an alternative to war but a smokescreen behind which the USA assembled its massive firepower.

But limiting CSWG to "Stop the War" did prevent it from campaigning for the kind of action that could actually have stopped war breaking out: workers' action to stop supplies to the allied troops and political strike action against the build up of troops.

The only actions which this limited unity around "Stop the War" allowed to take place were the national demonstrations called by CND and CSWG. From the platforms in Hyde Park speaker after speaker was allowed to argue for sanctions, for the imperialist war aims. Month after month the SWP listened in silence, refusing to challenge the sanctions-mongers' right to claim leadership of the movement, refusing even to heckle their pro-imperialist statements for fear of damaging "unity".

When war broke out the question was posed acutely for all those opposed to it: *how* do we stop the war?

For Benn, the CPB and CND the answer is simple: call a ceasefire, return to sanctions and have a "peace conference". No matter that at such a conference the rich and powerful imperialist countries will carve up the Middle East once again.

For anti-imperialists the answer must be: organise workers' strike action to force the government to pull the troops out; refuse to supply the troops; step up the class struggle in Britain so that the working class refuses to pay for the war through job losses, lower pay, NHS cuts or higher taxes.

The two positions lead in opposite directions when it comes to action.

Because they want to win the broadest possible coalition in Parliament, from Jeremy Corbyn to Ted Heath, the CND leaders will oppose working class action to force the troops to withdraw.

So "Stop the War" maintains unity only so long as no effective action is involved. As soon as we try to get any action aimed at stopping the war, beyond a parade through the streets of London, the CSWG leaders come forward

EDITORIAL



with their imperialist peace conference.

This was what happened in the near split in CSWG. The MPs and CND officials who run CSWG are self-appointed leaders. When delegates began to arrive from trade union and Labour Party branches asking to be allowed a vote at the national meetings, CSWG leaders expressly refused them this right. This would have made the unelected leaders accountable to real organisations and threatened to commit CSWG to working class action. It would have undermined their schemes for a broad, all-class coalition based on inaction.

Because consistent anti-imperialists like Workers Power are active within the local CSWG campaigns and raise anti-imperialist slogans on the peace demos, the CND leaders realised they had no immediate hope of getting Joan Ruddock or Denis Healy, let alone Ted Heath, to grace their platforms. So they designed the 15 Points, a full blown imperialist peace plan, to specifically exclude anti-imperialists, including "closet" anti-imperialists like the SWP who have consciously decided not to reveal to the masses that they too actually support Iraq.

Does the retreat from the 15 to the Four Points constitute a retreat by the CND leaders? Yes, tactically, from an attempt to expel the SWP. Politically, however, the Four Points are not a victory for the left.

The inclusion of "Coalition troops out of the region" in the Four Points is not a demand for action. It is clearly intended as a point for the agenda of the imperialist peace conference, to be realised alongside the demand "Iraq out of Kuwait" and to be overseen by the UN.

The absence of the call for sanctions, what SWP leader Alex Callinicos described as the "one sticking point" in the original 15 Points, has as much to do with the developing international situation as with CND's desire to appease the SWP. After 36 days of bombing and the destruction of most of Iraq's industrial infrastructure what use would a return to trade sanctions be?

CND leaders have currently settled for an agreement which allows the SWP to stay in CSWG, but gives them the excuse to call the police on groups like Workers Power simply for raising the slogan "Victory to Iraq".

It is suicidal for the so called revolutionary left to go along with this. On the grounds of "unity", the SWP has signed away its right to raise a policy embodied in its own conference documents and articles. For the even more grubby opportunist reason of wanting to out-manoeuvre the SWP, supporters of *Socialist Action* backed the 15 Points.

The left has not gained anything from the deal done to save the SWP's seat at the CSWG meetings. It has lost the opportunity to make a clean break with the pro-sanctions middle class pacifists and launch a campaign aimed at getting workers' action to stop the war. And to save the status quo the opportunist left will be prepared to turn against the consistent anti-imperialists; to aid the CND leaders in their attempts to silence us at meetings and demonstrations.

The bureaucratic patch-up around the Four Point peace plan does not mean we have seen the end of splits in the anti-war movement or of attempts to exclude the left. At the first real sign of a split within the ruling class the CND leaders will set out once again to entice the pro-imperialist peace camp in Parliament into their campaign. Then the price will yet again be the exclusion of the left, the muzzling of anti-imperialist slogans on the streets and even, as at the height of the Malvinas War, an end to street demonstrations altogether.

Pacifism never stops wars. Cross class unity around ill-defined and empty slogans never leads to unity in action. CSWG is the living proof of this. ■

FOR THE first time since the Vietnam war socialists are having to define their attitude to conscription and "conscientious objection". Unlike the Malvinas war or the invasions of Grenada and Panama, the Gulf War involves vast military ground forces, over half a million men and women under arms.

In countries without conscription, like Britain and the USA, large numbers of reservists have been called up. In France, Spain, Italy and Greece, countries with conscript armies, the issue is even more sharply posed. How should working class youth respond to being called up and sent to a war which many of them see as unjust?

On the left in Britain a common response is to encourage reservists or soldiers to become conscientious objectors and refuse to serve in an "unjust war". This is a reformist tradition that extends back to the First World War with the policies of the Independent Labour Party and British Socialist Party. Revolutionary communists stand in a different tradition. It stems from Lenin and the struggle waged by the internationalists against both chauvinism and pacifism within the workers' movement in the First World War.

Class war

Leninists base their attitude to military service on the necessity of class war; on the recognition that the bourgeoisie would rather drown the workers' movement in blood than lose its power and privilege. As such the revolutionary policy on workers being recruited into the army had nothing in common with pacifism.

Lenin summed up this position: "An oppressed class which does not strive to learn to use arms, to acquire arms, only deserves to be treated like slaves."

Revolutionary internationalists within the pre-1914 workers' movement recognised the growing militarisation of society, which went along with the development of imperialism, and fought against it. But they fought it by seeking to overthrow capitalism, by opposing every attempt to strengthen the bosses' army, by voting against all military budgets and by opposing the bosses' conscription of youth. Against this they fought for the right of voluntary military training and for a workers' militia. But alongside these demands they also sought to turn the militarisation of society against the bosses.

Harnessing

The revolutionary internationalists during the First World War always recognised the vital importance of harnessing the anti-war sentiments amongst women, wives and mothers of the soldiers, and mobilising them against the bosses. But Lenin wrote in 1916:

"The whole of social life is being militarised... How will proletarian women oppose this? Only by cursing war and everything military, only by demanding disarmament? The women of an oppressed and really revolutionary class will never accept that shameful role. They will say to their sons, 'You will soon be grown up. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn the military art properly. The proletariat needs this knowledge not to shoot your brother workers of other countries as is being done in the present war, and as the traitors to socialism are telling you to do. They need it to fight the bourgeoisie of their own country, to put an end to exploitation poverty and war, and not by pious wishes but by defeating and disarming the bourgeoisie.'"

Workers and conscription

"Hell no, we won't go!" has been the chant on peace demonstrations around the world. In Britain there is no immediate prospect of conscription, but in many other countries it is a reality. How should we fight conscription? Can defying the call-up stop the war? **John McKee** looks at the lessons of the revolutionary tradition for today.



Then ...

Faced with a war Marxists fight against the bosses' war plans, war budgets, and conscription. We start from the principle: not a penny, not a person for the defence of this system. At the same time we utilise tactics designed to take this struggle into the army, with the ultimate aim of organising and training the working class for the armed struggle against capitalism.

In Britain during the First World War the shop stewards' movement, whose leadership lay largely in the hands of socialists and revolutionary syndicalists, often successfully carried out the first task but failed in the second. The Clyde Workers' Committee and the Sheffield workers led major struggles against attempts by the government and the bosses to use the war to undermine their conditions and wages. This included major strikes against

the arbitrary call up of exempted skilled workers which forced the government to back down.

J T Murphy, a leader of the movement and later a founder member of the Communist Party, pointed out that the pacifist stance on the part taken by the majority of socialists had a fatal effect in the army. The Socialist Labour Party, which Murphy was a leader of, denounced the war as imperialist and advised its members to refuse to serve in the army, declaring that "the only war they would serve in was 'the class war'".

Murphy pointed out the results of these policies in his book *Preparing for Power*:

"It is certainly true that the conscientious objectors' movement succeeded in focusing a considerable body of opinion against the war. But it is also true that it kept

the army and navy free from the anti-war elements, free from the propagandists of the class war, in a more effective way than if the government had designed a plan for this purpose. It left the armed forces totally dependent upon their own reactions to the war and without the guidance of any revolutionary leadership. There is no evidence of the existence at that time of any attempt to permeate the armed forces with revolutionary ideas."

Trotsky, in collaboration with the Socialist Workers Party of the United States (SWP-US), applied the Leninist "proletarian military policy" to the USA on the eve of World War Two. The US ruling class was preparing the population for war. Conscription was to be introduced for the first time during peacetime. The Trotskyists in the USA were agitating amongst a working class which increasingly supported the moves to war. They were fooled by the argument that the war would be a struggle against Hitler and the threat of fascism.

At the same time as fighting against the bosses' plans for conscription, Trotsky advocated workers' control of military training as a means of addressing the mass of workers willing to go and "fight fascism".

Convinced

While these workers might not be convinced immediately by the revolutionaries' arguments about the nature of the war, they could be convinced, on a class basis, of the need to oppose the bosses' control of conscription and the results of this - the sending of half-trained conscripts into war, the use of conscripts as cannon fodder by the officers, the degradation of young workers by the officers.

This position was summed up in the Fourth International's manifesto against the war:

"The militarisation of the masses is further intensified every day. We reject the grotesque pretension of doing away with this militarisation through empty pacifist protests. All the great questions will be decided in the next epoch arms in hand. The workers should not fear arms: on the contrary they should learn to use them. Revolutionaries no more separate themselves from the people during war than in peace. A Bolshevik strives to become not only the best trade unionist but the best soldier.

We do not wish to permit the bourgeoisie to drive untrained or half-trained soldiers at the last hour onto the battlefield. We demand the state immediately provide the workers and the unemployed with the possibility of learning how to handle the rifle, the hand grenade, the machine gun, the cannon, the airplane, the submarine and the other tools of war. Special military schools are neces-

sary in close connection with the trade unions so that the workers can become skilled specialists in the military art, able to hold posts as commanders.

At the same time we do not forget for a moment that this war is not our war... the Fourth International builds its policy not on the military fortunes of the capitalist states but on the transformation of the imperialist war into a war of workers against the capitalists, on the overthrow of the ruling classes of all countries, on the socialist revolution."

Workers' control of military training, and of conscription once the bosses had achieved its implementation, was also a route to a proletarian militia, with trade unions choosing instructors and training connected to the factory and workplace. It started from the prevailing consciousness of the workers and along with other transitional demands, took them forward in struggle to the fight for socialism.

The Trotskyists were clear that the struggle against war and the struggle for the working class soldiers' rights within the army, were part and parcel of socialist agitation. To do this it was necessary for all socialists and militant workers, if conscripted, to go into the army along with their brothers (and sisters) to continue the class struggle in this vital arena. Trotsky fought bitterly against those who advocated conscientious objection against the imperialist war.

Unfortunately the SWP-US strayed away from the basic principles Trotsky advocated in the proletarian military policy after his death. SWP leader James P Cannon turned it into a rationale for a "workers' war" against Hitler, without making clear the difference between workers' control in a capitalist military machine and a workers' army in a workers' state. In turn this has led some to characterise the whole proletarian military policy as opportunist.

But the basic method of the proletarian military policy was correct and should be applied today.

How does the Leninist tradition on military policy relate to today's war, particularly in those countries where conscription exists or where reservists are being called up to go to the front?

If the British bosses attempted to introduce conscription we would fight against it all the way. Not because we see a small professional army as more progressive. A professional army and a conscript army are both forms of capitalist militarism which we oppose equally.

We would only stand a chance of beating conscription if we built a working class campaign, committed to political strike action, to stop the legislation needed to effect conscription.

Individual refusal to be conscripted would stand no more success than going out on strike alone in a workplace.

What happens if conscription is successfully introduced but resistance to being drafted swells into a mass movement? The draft dodging movement in the USA during the Vietnam war is the best example of this happening. Many on the left cite this as a justification of their adoption of the "hell no, we won't go" slogan. But there were crucial problems with this movement.

This campaign, though big, was never rooted in the working class. The draft dodgers were overwhelmingly middle class or students. Thousands of workers, especially those from the black ghettos, did go. Their experiences in Vietnam turned many against the war. Opposition at the front swelled to near mutinous proportions.

Yet this opposition remained fragmented, was not given a political direction and could not be used to strike at the command structure of the US armed forces in such a way as to speed up the victory of the Vietnamese liberation fighters. This opposition could have been massively more effective if all the opponents of the war had committed themselves to fighting within the army.

What of the situation in countries at war with Iraq today, like Italy and Greece, that have conscript armies which have not yet been sent to the Gulf? Here there is the possibility that many young conscripts will seek



... and now

to avoid being made to go to war by deserting, going into hiding or individually pleading conscientious objection. Once again this approach avoids confronting the problem of how we stop the imperialists' ability to wage their bloody wars. For every individual that refuses to go there will be many prepared to take their place.

To argue that because we support Iraq in this war individuals are right to refuse to go to the front is hopeless moralism, not class struggle politics.

Despite our 100% defence of such individuals from state repression we would not advocate refusal to enlist. Draft dodging and individual protests cannot stop imperialist war. Participation in the army, if we lose the struggle against conscription, can.

Revolutionaries would seek to utilise their time in the army by waging a relentless struggle for the rights of troops to political activity, to produce and have access to their own papers and bulletins, to attend political meetings in and out of uniform. In Britain today organisations like "Reservists against the War" should be campaigning for these rights and demanding that Labour MPs disrupt the working of parliament if discipline is meted out to such soldiers.

Experience

This sort of activity can lay the basis for an anti-war movement within the armed forces. Even hardened and indoctrinated professional soldiers, impervious to such agitation in peacetime, can be won to a revolutionary position by the experience of war.

In the context of the present war such agitation could ensure that soldiers refuse to go to the front on a collective and organised basis. Mass refusal by soldiers, armed with rifles, to embark for the front, backed up by workers' action sup-

porting them, would contribute far more to our attempt to defeat imperialism than any individual refusal to enlist. Nor is any of this far-fetched. In Germany conscripts refused to go to Turkey with anti-aircraft batteries and the pilot of a Soviet transport plane refused to transport them. In the USA there are several reports of individuals and small groups of soldiers refusing to train or to embark.

Mass resistance within the ranks is a different ball game to draft dodging. The question for individual soldiers becomes when and where to operate this tactic without isolating themselves from potential support.

Revolutionaries could give critical support to a movement of refusal to enlist led by reformists or pacifists only if it had a mass working class character. While this movement alone would not disarm the imperialists, it could obstruct and weaken the imperialist war effort. But it would have to organise acts of defiance on a collective basis backed up by strike action in the working class.

For example, revolutionaries would have supported the strikes led by the shop stewards' movement in the First World War against the compulsory call-up whilst pointing to their limitations.

But if we are prepared to give critical support to such movements shouldn't we advocate them in advance? Not in the present circumstances. In general mass working class boycotts of the call-up occur when there is an attempt at a general mobilisation in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation, or by an occupying force.

In Italy many workers boycotted Mussolini's call up in 1943. In Ireland there was a mass boycott of conscription during the struggle against British occupation in 1918. In both cases the workers involved proved ready to take up arms, or support those who took up arms, in

a guerrilla struggle against the occupying army.

The limitations of a mass refusal to enlist which is not backed up by mass strike action and the commitment to revolutionary action are obvious. After the mass of youth have burned their call up papers in the streets the military police can round them up one by one in their homes unless the working class can put up armed resistance.

This situation does not exist in any of the countries at war today.

The fact that, in many countries, masses of youth see this as an unjust war does not invalidate the Marxist tactics used by Lenin and Trotsky in the two world wars. In the Arab countries ranged against Iraq the working class youth do not have the luxury of individual protest and conscientious objection. These are military dictatorships and undemocratic regimes where, as well as harsh punishment, refusal to serve often results in the denial of basic rights and benefits.

Protests

In the imperialist countries the limited protests and refusals within the armed forces have had a far greater effect than the, so far equally small, individual refusals to be conscripted or recalled from reserve.

And in Britain "we won't go" means virtually nothing for 99% of working class youth. The British bosses fear workers armed and in uniform so much that they will not reintroduce conscription without a sharp turn in the international situation. If the bosses tried to make us go we would fight them with working class tactics.

We would fight to stop conscription. But at the same time we would endeavour to put arms into the hands of working class youth, and training under the control of their organisations, at the first opportunity.■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



Only socialism can stop war

WAR IS barbaric. The deliberate mutilation of people, the destruction of lives, property and the environment is horrific. No-one but the most psychopathic militarist can watch the slaughter and be unmoved.

Pacifists want to stop wars. Socialists want to stop wars. Many ruling class politicians hypocritically claim to want to stop wars, and that just one more war will stop them altogether.

The question is—how can war be stopped?

Pacifists argue that war is unnecessary, and that the way to prevent it is through settling disputes in other ways, through negotiation, compromise and disarmament. Some feminists argue that it is men who cause wars, though their solutions vary as to how to stop them happening. Cynics argue that "war is human nature": it has been with us throughout history and will always exist.

Marxists disagree with all these arguments.

Wars have scarred human history, not because they are part of human nature or simply because men are brought up to be aggressive. All wars are a conflict over material wealth. They may be fought under the banner of religious, nationalist and even class ideals. But at root they are conflicts over the ability to own or control the wealth of society.

Because we see the class struggle as the driving force of history pro-capitalist writers and professors often accuse Marxists of being unable to explain wars between nations. But such wars are themselves a reflection, and often a form, of the class struggle.

The capitalist class, though it exists across the globe, has no global interest. It is formed as a series of national classes, with national interests in conflict with one another. In the present epoch the big imperialist powers have fought repeated wars to conquer smaller, underdeveloped countries as markets and sources of cheap labour and raw materials. They have plunged the world into war twice in a struggle to re-divide the spoils of exploitation.

Capitalism is a system doomed to push both classes and nations into bloody war again and again. Class interest will push the imperialist bosses into war: it will push workers into bitter struggles just to claim the food, shelter and democratic rights denied to them in vast areas of the world.

This is why Marxists do not see war as an aberration in capitalist society, something which can be reformed out of existence or negotiated away. We want to rid the world of war. But to do that we have to rid the world of class conflict.

Only when society is organised to produce for human need can we achieve this goal. By eradicating the "generalised want" that has characterised all previous forms of society we can eradicate conflict between nations and abolish class.

But to do this we have to overthrow capitalist society.

If this could be done by sticking flowers into the rifle barrels of the capitalists' armed forces class society would have been abolished long ago. But the capitalists have developed the most formidable military machine in history. They have been prepared to unleash it even against a capitalist ruler (Saddam) who got out of hand. They would unleash it with double the ferocity against a workers' struggle to abolish capitalism

altogether.

Socialists don't renounce violence, because to do so would be to concede defeat in advance to the capitalists. To get rid of the bosses we will have to overthrow them by force.

There is an old phrase on the left of the workers' movement: "no war but class war". Fine as it sounds, it is wrong. The working class finds itself in the midst of all kinds of wars. There are just wars of national liberation against imperialist oppression, such as the Irish struggle against British occupation; wars by guerrilla armies led by pro-capitalist parties such as the Sandinista struggle against the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua; wars between degenerated workers' states and imperialist attackers, such as the war between Germany and the USSR after 1941, or North Vietnam and the USA in the 1960s and 70s.

In all these wars Marxists fight for the working class to take a side. Workers will temporarily find themselves allied to other social forces, even their direct class enemies, against a more immediate and formidable enemy. Taking sides in such a war does not mean giving political support to the capitalist or nationalist forces leading it, or refusing to criticise them. It means the workers fighting to ensure that their own interests come to the fore in the struggle.

Workers are always the victims of war. They are called on to do the fighting whilst the exploiters man the bar at the officers' club. When the capitalist war machine is turned against the "economic capability" of an enemy it is the workers' factories and homes that are devastated by high explosives. And, for the duration of every war, we are called upon to suspend the class struggle: take pay cuts and work longer hours in more dangerous conditions to keep up the war effort.

The way out of this murderous cycle is not the one offered by pacifism. Pleading for peace to the warmongers never works.

But the ordinary working people of the world do not have to be condemned to the endless horror of war. There is a way to cleanse human society of this barbarity for future generations. It is to overthrow the bosses and their system and unleash all the potential of human thought and labour, currently used for destruction, to meet the needs of millions.

That is why Marxists try to focus the struggle against war into a struggle against imperialism and the profit system. To those who plead with us not to "divert" the movement against war, not to "waste its time" with arguments against the pacifists, not to "confuse people" by taking sides in the Gulf War there is no better answer than the words of Leon Trotsky:

"The struggle against war and imperialism cannot be the task of any sort of special 'committees'. The struggle against war is the preparation for the revolution, that is to say, the task of working class parties and of the International.

Marxists pose this task before the revolutionary vanguard, without any frills. To the enervating slogan of 'disarmament' they counterpose the slogan of winning the army and arming the workers. Precisely in this is one of the most important dividing lines between Marxism and centrism drawn. Whoever does not utter aloud the revolutionary tasks will never find the courage to solve them."■

WHILE THE Tories pursue their war in the Middle East they have not forgotten the wars they have begun at home. One of their latest offensives has been launched against a favourite target of the Tory bigots and backwoodsmen—lesbians and gay men.

Section 28 of the Local Government Bill was not the end of the Tory offensive on lesbian and gay rights. Its victory has opened the door to further attacks. Through it the government forced libraries to dump books dealing with gay themes, banned council-run theatres from putting on "offensive" productions and made teachers exclude any reference to homosexuality which might be deemed supportive. Now the Tories are taking the anti-gay witch-hunt a step further: into the pub, the home and the bedroom.

On Saturday 16 February 10,000 lesbians and gay men and their supporters marched through the streets of London. They were protesting at the latest anti-gay legislation being proposed in Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill and Paragraph 16 of the Children's Act.

Paragraph 16, introduced just before the Christmas break in December, and so limiting the usual consultancy period, effectively bans lesbian or gay couples from becoming foster parents. Junior health minister, Virginia Bottomley, said, "Equal rights and 'gay rights' have no place in fostering".

The myth of lesbians and gays being the corrupters of youth is being dragged out again. We cannot be trusted with the welfare of young children, despite the fact that child abuse is largely a product of the heterosexual family unit and almost always committed by heterosexual men.

Clause 25 of the Criminal Jus-

CLAUSE 25

Criminalising gay sex

Bill is even more insidious. It makes the acts of soliciting, procuring of homosexual acts and indecency between men all sex crimes on a par with rape and child abuse. The simple act of chatting someone up in the pub, exchanging phone numbers, lending a room to a gay couple or kissing and showing affection in public could soon be crimes punishable by up to five years in prison. And not only that. Once out of jail the "offender" would then be liable to a further five years psychiatric treatment, presumably to cure them of their "sick" sexuality.

On 19 February John Patten and Kenneth Baker, the ministers trying to steer the Criminal Justice Bill through Parliament, announced that three offences—"homosexual acts between merchant seamen", "procurement" and "living off the earnings of male prostitution" were being dropped.

However, procurement falls under the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which is not normally used to bring prosecutions against gay men. Far more widely used is the 1956 Sexual Offences Act which legislates against "indecency between men", "solicitation by men"

and "procuring by men". The government is leaving this Act intact.

The Home Office claims that Clause 25 is really only intended to protect the community from "predatory homosexuals". But that of course leaves it up to the interpretation of the judges.

All of these legal moves are taking place against a backdrop of increased intimidation and repression of gay men under existing laws. In 1988, 2,562 men were convicted or cautioned for either soliciting, procuring or indecency. Thirteen were jailed.

In 1989 the number of jailings was 102, and 56 of these were sentenced to between six and 36 months. A further 2,314 non-custodial sentences were handed down. Between 1988 and 1989 convictions for "indecency between males" increased by 47%.

In December Operation Spanner resulted in 15 men being prosecuted for having consensual sado-masochistic (SM) sex. Eight of them were sent down for a total of 25 years! (See WP138) Any pair of consenting boxers would expect to receive far worse cuts and bruises than the minor injuries the defendants inflicted and received! Le-

gal advisers are now suggesting that to avoid prosecution lesbians or gay men who participate in SM sex should not keep diaries, letters or any other evidence of their sex lives.

This police crackdown is happening across the country in what appears to be a nationally co-ordinated campaign by the Association of Chief Police Officers. A letter is said to have been sent to arch-homophobe Chief Constable James Anderton from the head of Thames Valley outlining how the police can make use of the result of Operation Spanner and Clause 25 once it becomes law.

Not one of these "crimes" have victims. The "criminals" are consenting partners who are prosecuted for acts which straight couples can freely engage in any time. The legal attacks are not there to protect individuals, they are there to protect the idea of the "normal" family and "normal" sex.

The Tories fear that increased toleration of gay and lesbian sexuality undermines their family values. But increased sexual openness, freedom and tolerance is the only way to reduce the abuse which the Tories claim they are against. ■

Health-workers against the war

THE GOVERNMENT has plans to clear 7,000 beds in NHS hospitals to treat war casualties. Already the effects of the war have been felt in the NHS. Wards closed under tight budget restrictions introduced to prepare for the NHS "internal market" have been miraculously re-opened. Whitbread cancer ward in London, recently closed for "refurbishment", has now been designated as a war casualty ward.

At the same time "routine" hospital treatment has been cancelled wholesale, inflicting further misery on the one million people already waiting for treatment.

As the casualties begin to arrive health workers are facing management demands for more overtime, job changes, cancellation of holidays etc.

One nurse at a London Hospital told *Workers Power*.

"When the war started everyone was issued with a security photo-pass. But in peacetime management do nothing to protect the security of nurses and other health workers. We have had regular thefts and even rapes in hospitals and nurses' homes. Recently we were in dispute with management because they wanted to cut the overtime of the porters on the nurses' home security desk. As soon as the war is over it will be business as usual, with closed wards and lax safety standards again."

In several cities Health Workers Against War in the Gulf (HWAW) groups have been formed. At a meeting in London on 17 February 200 health workers met to form a central HWAW. They called a lobby of the Department of Health to protest against the war.

A member of Bloomsbury Health Workers Against the Gulf War said:

"Workers who want to stop this war should be boycotting war work. In the hospitals we will obviously not boycott treatment of casualties. But health workers have to insist that they are given no preferential treatment compared to those in similar need. If management open one closed ward to treat soldiers we should demand that they open all closed wards to treat the hundreds of thousands needing treatment now."

We should fight to make them take on extra staff. Hospitals are already understaffed and management have now volunteered us for casualty work without a commitment to employ more staff. Otherwise it will be a case of working massive amounts of overtime and cancelling study leave and annual leave.

It is criminal that a system which can produce 'smart bombs' at half a million dollars each has hospitals relying on charity to buy hi-tech scanners and to keep wards open."

The next step is to organise anti-war groups in every NHS workplace, with leafletting and demonstrations aimed at building strike action; against the war and against any attempt to make health workers or civilian patients pay for it. ■

For more information on HWAW contact Andy Player on: 081 992 6312

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Stop the cuts Smash the Poll Tax!

DURING THE next few weeks local councils will have to determine how much they can spend in the coming financial year.

Their decisions will be crucial for the future of jobs, services and the level of the Poll Tax in each borough. As one local authority spokesperson put it:

"The cuts will be awesome. The fat is long gone; the flesh has been stripped; now the bone will be sawed."

In the last 12 years local authorities have been hit by 126 separate punitive government measures. Faced with this, Labour authorities had to make a choice: either refuse to accept the spending restrictions and mobilise the working class in defence of an illegal budget, or make that class pay the cost of Whitehall's restrictions themselves. With the partial exception of Lambeth and Liverpool in the mid-80s, the latter course was chosen. Rate rises, by as much as 70% in some boroughs, allowed councils to buy time at workers' expense.

"Creative accounting" became the solution to every problem. Local authorities made up for revenue shortfalls by playing the financial markets and borrowing on a "spend now, pay later" basis. In the case of Islington, banks are now threatening to call in debts of £200 million, raised in 1986/7 for new homes and housing repairs.

The introduction of the Poll Tax made a bad situation unworkable. This year, to avoid capping and the

political death warrant of a high Poll Tax, most authorities are committed to "efficiency based" vicious cuts programmes.

Authorities have attacked their workforce and savaged services. Twelve hundred workers took voluntary redundancy in Sheffield, with another 800 jobs to go. Newcastle will shed 850 jobs in 1992/3 to save £13.5 million. Its leader Jeremy Beecham says: "If services are the priority, you can't rely on

their refusal to lead a fightback against the Tories' assault on local government, workers have been charged more, through higher rents and rates, for less and less!

Department of Environment leaks suggest that Heseltine's "fundamental review" will only make things worse.

Heseltine favours a property tax backed up by a personal premium on household numbers. The property tax will be based on floor space—which means a luxury studio flat in Docklands could cost the same as a rundown council flat in Lambeth. The personal premium would ensure that the principle of the Poll Tax is left intact.

The Tory promise of a review of the Poll Tax was won through the mass protests and the high levels of non-payment. The resistance continues, with a recent *New Statesman* survey showing that the proportion of people who had paid nothing towards their Poll Tax at the beginning of February varies from 3% in North Cornwall, to 34-35% in inner-city authorities such as Hackney, Liverpool and Newcastle. In Strathclyde, Scotland, with just two months left to the end of the financial year, the council has collected less than half the amount due.

In Macclesfield, where there are over 20,000 non-payers, Gordon Ross and John Sanderson have been given suspended jail sentences for non-payment. 150 people walked out to protest against the sen-

ALL BRITAIN
ANTI-POLL TAX
FEDERATION

Demonstration

Saturday 23 March 1991

Assemble:

Embankment 12 Noon
March to Hyde Park

vacancies occurring where you want them". This is a crude attempt to divide council workers and service users in a battle over shrinking resources. The reality is shown in Haringey, which has shed thousands of jobs, but was still forced by its chief officers to provide only "life and limb" services from January.

Between 1979 and 1990 government grant as a proportion of local authority expenditure fell from 52.2% to 40.5%. As a result of the cowardice of Labour councillors and

ITALY

Mass walkouts greet war

YOUNG PEOPLE had already organised demonstrations before the conflict began. But on Thursday morning, 17 January, a few hours after the bombing began workers spontaneously organised flying pickets at the gates of hundreds of small and large factories and went on strike. Very soon the movement spread to the second and third shifts and lasted until Friday morning, 18 January.

In many towns the local sections of the CGIL (the Italian TUC)—under the pressure of their own members—ignored their National Secretariat's letter which told them not to strike.

Instead they organised local demonstrations, supported by hundreds of thousands of workers. In the main towns processions bigger than any for a long time marched through the streets.

It is symptomatic that the workers of the FIAT-Mirafiori plant in Turin (the largest factory in Europe) went on strike and work stoppages also took place in thousands of small and medium enterprises.

The demand for a national general strike against the decision of Andreotti's government to join the war against Iraq, a decision approved by parliament on the morn-

Voce Operaia

ing of the 17th, was raised widely the next day.

The appearance of workers on the scene strengthened the movement against the war. But it has not, in itself, changed the petit bourgeois pacifist nature of that movement.

Fear was the main impetus for the strikes. Only the most progressive, left wing sectors of the working class have understood the imperialist character of the war and the need for an open political struggle

against the imperialist and anti-working class Andreotti government.

In the following days, after the refusal of the national trade union leaderships, the factory councils of Breda and Ansaldo in Milan, and many others, together with the COBAS (Rank and File Committee) of the teachers and the train drivers organised a national *ad hoc* assembly in order to prepare a general strike—if necessary from below—against the resistance of the trade union bureaucrats and the PDS (formerly the Communist Party).

Meanwhile, at the beginning of February hundreds of student demonstrations and strikes took place in many towns. From them, almost everywhere, peace committees were born where the leadership is, in most cases, in the hands of petit bourgeois pacifist forces. In general these committees, while demanding the withdrawal of the Italian troops from the Gulf, make no distinction between the progressive character of Iraq's resistance war and the imperialist attack led by the USA. This predominance of neutral, petit bourgeois pacifism is also due to the positions of the far left organisations which, in most cases, whilst condemning the imperialist

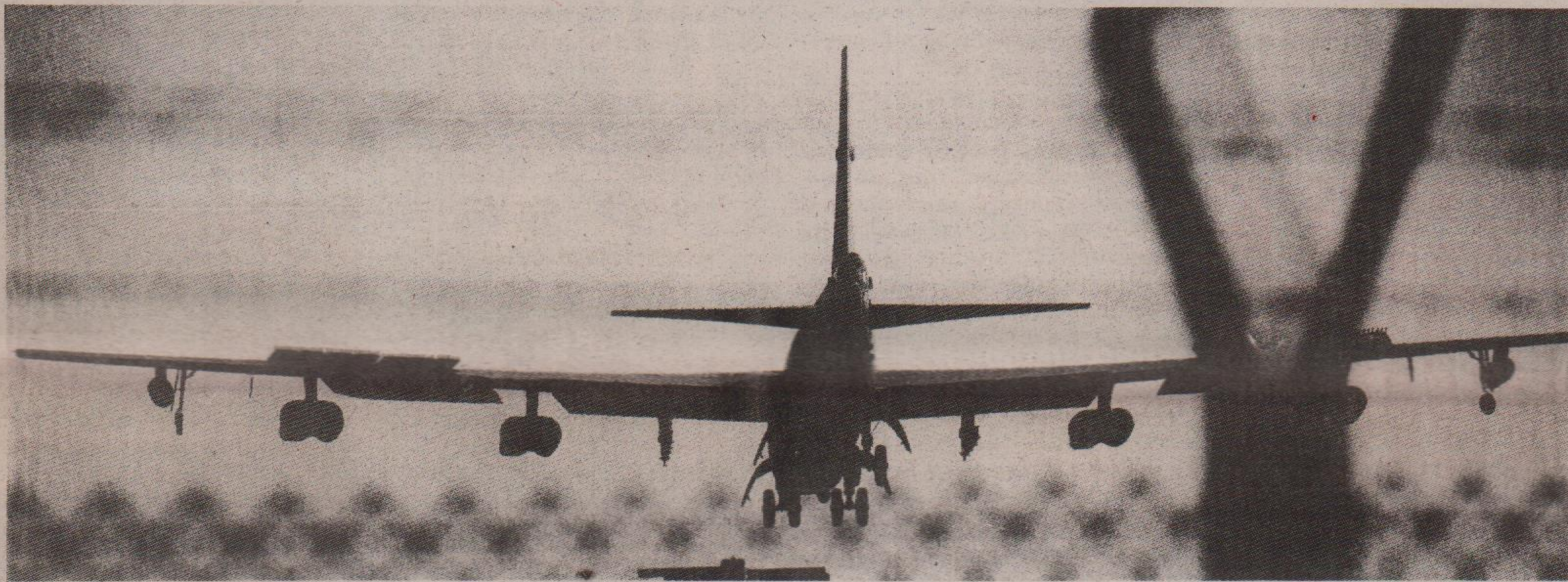
attack, don't give support to Iraq. While criticising the pacifists, we are in a block with them. Neutralists and defeatists are working side by side. However, the anti-imperialist wing, the one supporting Iraq without politically supporting Saddam Hussein, is a very small minority.

Yet things are beginning to change. As time goes by the petit bourgeoisie is passing from a position of rejecting the war to a position which says "now the war is in progress let's crush that crazy Saddam in order to stop the massacre as soon as possible". For this reason, losing its real roots and social support, pacifism is in a crisis and at an impasse. The war is politically polarising Italian society and leaves no room for the "third camp". Everybody is beginning to understand that it is necessary to take sides.

In the factories the opinion that it is a dirty imperialist and looting war is widespread—a war which must end as soon as possible with a ceasefire and an agreement between the two sides. The pro-interventionist opinion is a minority, whilst the workers who want to see a defeat for the USA as in Vietnam, are slowly increasing in number.

Voce Operaia is addressing them most of all, urging them to organise themselves in the fight for a general strike. ■

The Associazione Voce Operaia (Workers Voice) is an Italian left group. It is not affiliated to the LRCI. The comrades of Voce Operaia submitted this report to Workers Power and it is printed unedited.



ON 14 February simmering conflict within the Irish anti-war movement came into the open as the pacifist Gulf Peace Campaign (GPC) acted to exclude the No To War in the Gulf Campaign (NTWG) which stands for "Western Troops Out of the Gulf". Unlike in Britain, the anti-imperialist NTWG Campaign is in fact bigger and better organised than the Peace Campaign.

The NTWG Campaign, though it was set up in October, only sought to draw in activists in January of this year through a series of public meetings and demonstrations.

Leaders of the Workers Party, Greens, CND and Labour Party moved to pre-empt it by calling a peace demonstration on 12 January. However, more than half of that demonstration, and even more of the second GPC demonstration on 17 February, was made up of the NTWG forces and banners.

The NTWG Campaign was initiated by the Socialist Workers Movement (SWM—sister organisation of the British SWP). The SWM was convinced that there would be a large, spontaneous pacifist movement within which they could use their control of the NTWG Committee to carve out a niche for themselves. So they sat tight and waited until the war was upon us.

When the war erupted the IWG was alone in raising debate, in the meetings around the NTWG Campaign, on the need to take sides.

The SWM's concessions to the pacifist campaign even included removing the slogan of Troops Out from their literature for the 2 February demonstration and from petitions. It won them no favours,

IRELAND

No refuelling at Shannon!

however, from the GPC.

No large pacifist movement emerged and the NTWG Campaign found itself virtually alone in organising activist groups. On 3 February there was a meeting of delegates from 13 NTWG action groups. This committed the NTWG Campaign to maintaining the fiction of its affiliation to the GPC, despite the GPC's adoption of seven conditions of affiliation which conflicted with the NTWG's platform.

Irish Workers Group

conditions. Despite this NTWG was formally excluded on 14 February.

The IWG scored a success in getting teach-ins on the war in two colleges. IWG agitation in Galway Regional College resulted in an emergency student assembly which voted to boycott lectures

pacifists have severely limited its activity.

Irish republicanism has failed to come out on the side of Iraq against imperialism. The republicans content themselves with pointing out, correctly, British hypocrisy and drawing arguments in defence of their own struggle from the events of the war.

Nevertheless, a distinct nationalist element exists across the whole anti-war movement in the united support for the slogan "No

Industrial action at Shannon to strike against the re-fuelling would be a major gain if the Irish left could win it, but so far anti-war unity on the issue stops short of such action

The NTWG Campaign lays responsibility for the war on the western imperialists, but the GPC demanded a commitment to slogans of a United Nations diplomatic solution and for Iraq to leave Kuwait.

The SWM leaders were faced with exactly the same ultimatum from the pacifists as in Britain (see p3). Finally they agreed that there would be no problem signing an agreement to the GPC

for an afternoon in defiance of threats from the College on 7 February. For four hours a mass meeting of up to 700 students debated the war, with several IWG speakers contributing.

The other teach-in, in Derry, was smaller and there were no boycotts of lectures, but it was a significant gain for the anti-war campaign in a town where the SWM's domination of the campaign and their concessions to the

re-fuelling at Shannon".

The fact of Irish military neutrality, as well as containing an important progressive element of contradiction with imperialism, is something of a sacred cow for the democratic petit bourgeoisie in Ireland.

But despite its formal neutrality the Irish state has always identified profoundly with the USA. And with massive US investments in Ireland since the

1970s, political support for the USA becomes ever more explicit. Indeed, the sanctification of the Gulf War with United Nations legitimacy has led to the most open bourgeois campaign ever to abandon military neutrality altogether.

The Gulf Peace Campaign led one demonstration of 500 people, many of them students from Cork and Dublin, to the Shannon area. But it stopped well away from the airport to hear Labour and Workers Party spokespersons defend "Irish neutrality".

Industrial action at Shannon to strike against re-fuelling would be a major gain if the Irish left could win it, but so far, anti-war unity on the issue of re-fuelling stops short of such action. The trade union bureaucracy is not averse to calling abstractly for an end to the war, but it has no intention of allowing any action in the economic sphere which would threaten the strategy of encouraging US investment to "create jobs" in Ireland.

The Irish Labour Party, rooted in the union bureaucracy, has been silent on the war, supporting the decisions of the United Nations whilst passively sponsoring the Gulf Peace Campaign. It has mobilised no one.

The Workers Party is more vigorous in the Peace Campaign but only for parliamentary advantage. It shows little more taste than Labour for mobilising on the streets, let alone at Shannon or in the hundreds of major British and American owned workplaces in Ireland.

The opportunities for the NTWG Campaign, therefore, are exceptional. Crucially, the campaign needs to relate to the illusions of the mass of the working class through placing demands on the reformist leaders and fighting for affiliation to NTWG in the workers' organisations. Sadly, the majority on the Irish left has once again chosen to subordinate itself politically within a popular front of the reformists, Greens, clergy and Stalinists.

The IWG stands out alone against that strategy within the Irish anti-war movement. ■

WHEN IT set up the extensive alliance against Iraq the USA stated that it had a single aim—to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The majority of Arab nations bought this at the Cairo summit back in August. Gorbachev did too, at his meeting with Bush in Helsinki in September. The cherry on the cake for US and British imperialism came in November when the United Nations (UN) authorised force to achieve the “liberation of Kuwait”.

This limited war aim was not merely important as a diplomatic tool, used to fashion the alliance. It had a high propaganda value in selling the war to the workers of the imperialist countries. Freeing poor little Kuwait from big, bad Iraq was presented as a noble aim that all who loved democracy and liberty could readily identify with.

Yet this was never the sole, or even central, goal of US imperialism. A moment's reflection on the scale of the armed forces built up by the alliance, the hardware they have deployed, the massive damage their bombs and missiles inflicted in the opening days of the war reveals this.

Proportion

All of these are massively out of proportion to the task of “freeing Kuwait”. And the war they are waging is designed to compel many more people than Saddam Hussein and many more countries than Iraq to fulfil their will. This begs the question—what are the real war aims of the USA and their allies?

In 1979 the Iranian revolution destroyed the balance of power that existed in the Gulf region. Iran, under the Shah, was a client state of US and British imperialism. It was their well armed policeman in the region. It protected the oil rich, but militarily weak, Arab states in the Gulf. It deterred the regional ambitions of Syria and Iraq, both of which the USA considered to have too close relations with the USSR at the time.

Overthrow

When the Shah was overthrown imperialist control of this oil rich and strategically vital region suffered a major setback. Since then the USA has been determined to restore a new balance of power once again suited to its interests. It backed Iraq in the early and closing stages of its war against Iran in order to neutralise Khomeini's Islamic regime. It secretly aided Iran for a whole period in the middle of that war, in order to ensure that Iraq did not become so powerful that it itself posed a threat to US interests.

In the early 1980s the existence of a hard line Stalinist foreign policy in the pre-Gorbachev USSR, and the USA's own internal political weakness in the aftermath of its defeat in Vietnam, prevented it from directly imposing its will in the Middle East.

Arsenal

After a decade of rebuilding its military arsenal and pride, after getting away with military interventions in Grenada, Libya, Panama and, covertly, Nicaragua the USA was presented with a golden opportunity by the collapse of Stalinism and the retreat of Soviet foreign policy to the simple goal of getting the west to prop up Gorbachev.

After 1989, the year the “cold war” ended, the international situation was more favourable for the USA to act once again as the world's policeman. The flights of fantasy in *Top Gun* were ready to make the transition from cinema screen to real live CNN news broadcasts. Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was the cue for action.

This invasion was the adventurist response of a desperate regime to its economic crisis. Iraq owed

Kuwait a fortune thanks to the Emir's generosity in lending Saddam the money to prosecute his war against Iran. Worse, Kuwait's overproduction of oil was keeping the price of that commodity low. Since Iraq gets virtually its entire revenue from the export of oil Kuwait's action was hurting it badly.

Intention

Saddam's original intention was to force Kuwait to write off his debts and cut oil production. There is evidence that the USA encouraged Saddam to do this, or at least gave him the go-ahead. One week before the invasion of Kuwait April Glaspie, US Ambassador to Baghdad, told Saddam that the USA “would have no opinion on your border conflicts with Kuwait”.

The transcript of this meeting shows that Glaspie repeated several times that:

“Secretary of State James Baker

THE GULF WAR

has directed our official spokesman to emphasise this instruction from the President”.

Yet only two months before that conversation the US National Security Council submitted a white paper to the President which described Saddam's Iraq as “the optimum contenders to replace the Warsaw Pact” as the rationale for continued military spending after the end of the cold war.

Exercise

And while Glaspie was smooth talking Saddam, Norman Schwarzkopf and the US Central Command were taking part in a training exercise centred on the scenario of Iraq invading Kuwait.

The secrecy with which the world's democracies carry on their international relations means we may never know whether Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was a massive US set up. Certainly a regime capable of entrapping the black mayor of Washington with a videotaped drugs session is capable of anything.

What is not in doubt is the inevitability of US imperialism's response to Iraq's action. Here at last was the pretext for the USA to move in and re-establish its domination over the Gulf region and to do so with the blessing of “world opinion”.

Iraq's peace initiative in mid-February has forced the USA, and with it Britain, to come clean on what they want the war to achieve. The great lie about “freeing Kuwait” was exposed when Bush declared that Saddam's offer to withdraw was a “cruel hoax”.

He went on to spell out his real post-war agenda. Restoring the Emir to Kuwait needs to be achieved by a demonstration of the USA's awesome firepower, not by a deal with Saddam. If he can achieve this Bush will show to

Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states, the value of a permanent US military presence in the region as the guarantor of their despotic regimes and the very existence of the states themselves. As the US magazine *Newsweek* put it:

“Saddam's invasion of Kuwait toppled the flimsy security structure the Gulf nations had erected. . . the Gulf nations will have to find new ways to hold their defenses in place—and only American forces may be able to provide the glue for years to come.”

The Pentagon is salivating at the possibility of a 29,000 strong land force stationed in Saudi Arabia as well as a network of airbases after the war is over. The function of such a force would not merely be to intervene against rival states. It would, pre-eminently, be a force to intervene against any repeats of the early days of the Iranian revolution. The masses of the region would find their struggles the target of rapid US military action.

Even if Arab reluctance hampered the maintenance of such an on-site garrison the new balance of power in the region would leave the door open to its troops and planes returning at short notice. Its ships, along with Britain's, would remain in the Gulf no matter what.

The balance the USA wants is a severely weakened Iraq, an economically frail and war weary Iran and a Syria compromised by its participation in the coalition against Iraq. That way the strength and national interest of each cancels out the others

Stability

Stability will be achieved by the elimination of any one potentially maverick strong state. And if Saudi Arabia proves reluctant to keep US troops on its territory Egypt and Turkey will remain as springboards for any further US interventions into the area. Establishing and maintaining this balance is top of the agenda for the US

In 1989 the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe opened up a new chapter in world history. Gorbachev's reforms inside the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s and his subsequent foreign policy retreats in the face of imperialist pressure in Afghanistan, Southern Africa and South East Asia began the process of ending the “cold war”. The 1989 events, followed by the unification of Germany on imperialism's terms, appeared to complete the process.

Euphoria gripped the imperialist ruling classes. The “death of communism”, even the “end of history”, was supposed to herald a new era of capitalist prosperity and stability. Prompted by such an optimistic scenario George Bush began to speak of the new world order. At last the United Nations (UN) could do the job that it was designed to do, he said.

The UN was always intended to be a means for the USA to exercise its role as world leader behind the facade of “international law”. When necessary the UN was called in to legitimise its imperialist piracy in the semi-colonies. The role of the USSR within the UN never, as the Stalinists believed, changed its character. But it did complicate US diplomacy and oblige it, in Vietnam for example, to play its role as world policeman without UN authorisation.

With *perestroika* and the collapse of the Eastern European Stalinist regimes Bush set his sights on a new world order in which Soviet cooperation would guarantee the USA's role as world military and political leader. He tested the water with his savage attack on Panama at the end of 1989 and got away with it.

There was an additional factor

Bush's

imperialists.

Henry Kissinger, the still respected architect of US imperialist strategy in the 1970s, underlined the value of this war aim to the USA, and why it was dependent on the achievement of a military victory:

“The less ambiguous the outcome of the war, the more it will enhance the stature of the moderate Arab countries that co-operated in Operation Desert Storm—and the more creativity it will allow our diplomacy in solving the problems of the Middle East in the post-war period.”

And the balance of power that will, in Kissinger's words, “emerge from this conflict” would stabilise the Gulf, earning the USA the gratitude of the imperialist powers dependent on oil from the sheikhdoms. Additionally it would allow the USA, at a time of its

“War is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will”, wrote Clausewitz, the great military theorist. With the Gulf War now over a month old we are beginning to see the real “will” of the USA and Britain, writes Mark Harrison.

choosing, to apply pressure on Israel to enter a dialogue on the Palestinian issue. With the Arab threat to Israel neutralised by a combination of US armour and US diplomacy the case for Israel's intransigent refusal to negotiate a



“From the confluence of the behaviour can begin anew. W Bush. Civilised behaviour, G blasting civilians and rejectin Merton, gives a clear indica

New w

pursue its relentless quest for super-profits. It was, in other words, the pretext the USA needed to demonstrate that it remained the world's leading political power.

In the Gulf War the USA has achieved this goal to an extent. It has demonstrated that its new world order is one in which semi-colonial regimes will be obliged obey the White House or face the sort of punishment that has been meted out to Iraq.

The idea that this order heralds an era of “civilised behaviour” is a cruel hoax. It heralds a period of US bullying on an unprecedented scale. Most important of all, it is an order that cannot last.

Bush crows about the fact that the alliance against Iraq represents the whole world. In particular he cites the participation of Arab countries in the military attack on Iraq as proof of this. For their own self-serving reasons the Syrian, Egyptian and other ruling classes have committed their troops. But in doing so they have stored up enormous problems for themselves.

Demonstrations and general strikes involving millions, enraged at the invasion of Iraq, have rocked the entire Arab world. The cliques

real war aims

settlement with the Palestinians will be undermined and the USA will, in the words of the Economist, be able to "act as honest broker between Israel and the Palestinians".

To achieve this scenario, how-

ever, the US imperialists and their allies know that one of their war aims must include the destruction of Iraq—its regime, economy and military power. Increasingly the allies have been explicit on this point. Britain's defence secretary,

Tom King, said that Saddam's "obscene military machine" had to be destroyed. Bush greeted the Iraqi peace offer with the retort that "the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people [should] take matters into their own hands to force Sad-

dam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside".

No such war aims are contained within any of the UN resolutions that Bush and Major claim that they are implementing. What does exist, and it merely demonstrates the UN's pro-imperialist function, is the call for the restoration of "peace, security and stability" in the Gulf.

Using this catch-all phrase the USA and Britain are determined to smash the Iraqi army and march onto Baghdad in order to create the conditions under which Saddam could be overthrown and a new military dictator, more willing to do their bidding, installed.

Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary, made this clear in rejecting the Iraqi, Iranian and Soviet peace proposals. "It is more likely that this aggression has to be ended by military means", he said. He should have added, because only military means will get us everything we are after.

Stipulate

So, even if Iraq did withdraw from Kuwait the imperialists would not be satisfied. A source close to the White House revealed to the press that any ceasefire agreed to by the imperialists would stipulate that the Iraqi army would be obliged to surrender its tanks, cannons and missiles in Kuwait and on the Iraqi border to the allies. In the words of one American officer:

"to get a ceasefire they've got to get outta their tanks and walk to Baghdad".

Part of the post-war settlement would involve reducing the Iraqi army from one million to 300,000.

This would be part of an arms control treaty forced on the region by the USA. It would, according to Kissinger, fit the bill for the new balance of power because it would "pull the teeth of Iraq's offensive capability without destroying its capacity to resist invasion from covetous neighbours".

All of these war aims flow from imperialism's strategic interests in the region, not from UN resolutions or Bush and Major's love for freedom and democracy. The framework for the resolution of Middle East conflicts on a counter-revolutionary basis, under the auspices of US diplomacy would be established.

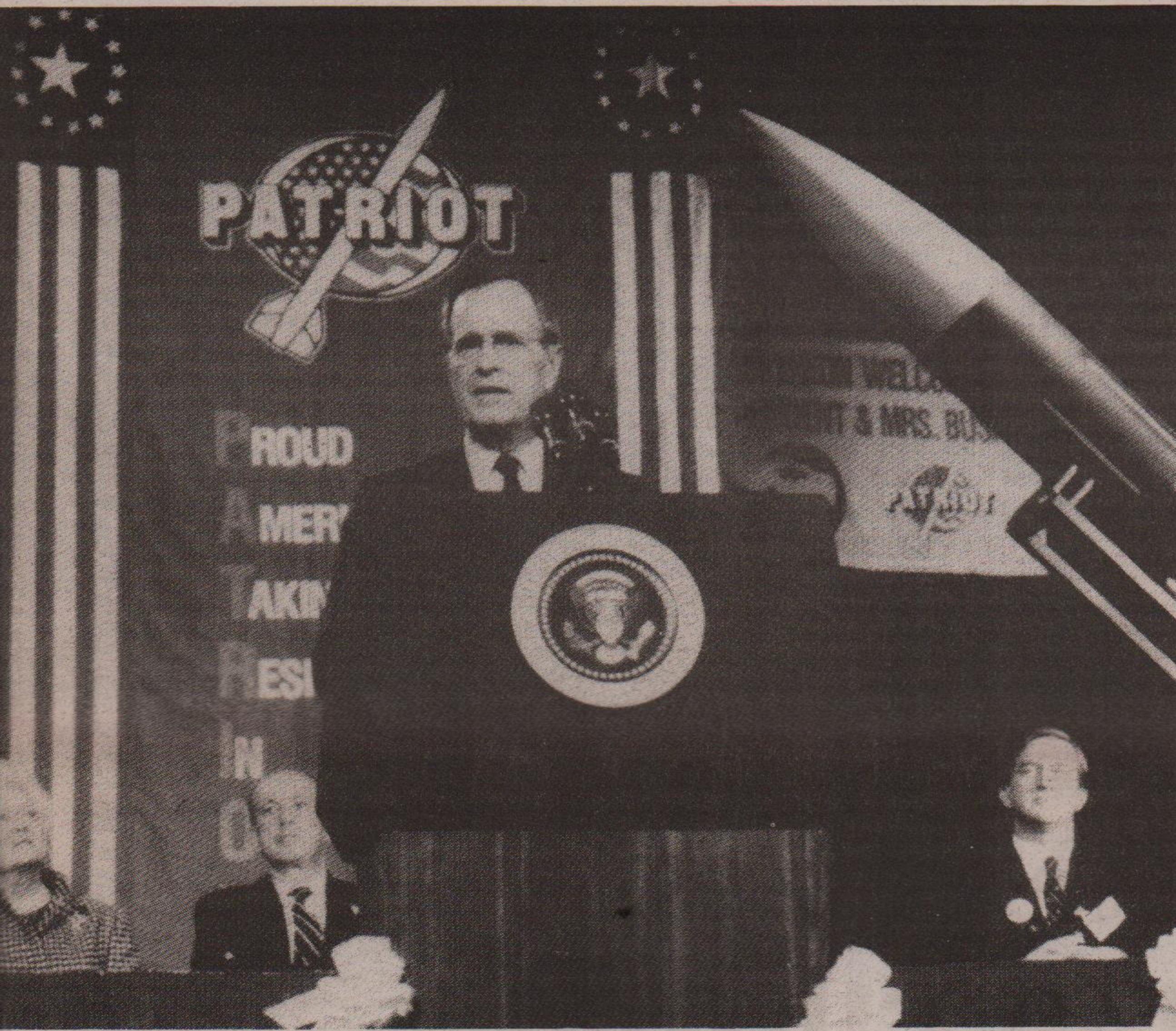
Dominance

US military dominance would be secured. No regional power would be a threat to stability. Oil production, and the super profits of the imperialist multinational oil companies, would be freed from disruption. This is something that the USA itself, whose oil imports grew by 63% between 1985 and 1989, wants to achieve as well as its political and strategic objectives.

It is clear from these now explicitly stated war aims that the war being waged, primarily by the USA, Britain and France, is unjust and imperialist to the core. That is why as anti-imperialists and as revolutionary Marxists we say that this war cannot be ended on a just basis short of the resounding defeat for the imperialist alliance and victory for Iraq.

Its victory will create a real chance to thwart the US war aims, prevent the new pro-imperialist balance of power, stop the sell-out of the Palestinians and overthrow the corrupt dictatorships and emirates. It will create the conditions for the progressive overthrow of the Ba'ath regime, not Bush's desired military coup.

But a ceasefire on imperialism's terms will hand them their objectives on a plate. ■



...giris and the Euphrates—where civilisation began—civilised
...can build a better world, a new world order" declared George
...George Bush style, consists of the non-stop pounding of Iraq,
...g every peace offer that comes his way. This, writes Arthur
...on of the kind of world order he wants to construct.

world disorder

who run these countries are risking mass revolt by committing themselves to imperialism's cause. Jordan, torn between the need to maintain its links with the west and a population committed to supporting Iraq, is merely the sharpest expression of this contradiction.

A victory for imperialism will leave the Arab masses simmering with resentment. The maintenance of imperialist troops in the region will fuel this resentment and sow the seeds of revolt. Imperialism's inability to bring about a just settlement for the Palestinians, the Kurds, the Iraqis themselves guarantees years of instability in the region.

Even within the imperialist camp the USA's vision of the new world order has taken a battering. While Britain has proved a loyal ally to Bush, the rest of Europe certainly does not see eye to eye with the White House. France, while participating in the alliance in order to assure itself a place in the post war settlement, has been distinctly less hawkish than Britain and the USA.

Divisions between the EC and the US/British axis exploded at the outset of the war. Germany and Belgium were subject to a tirade of chauvinist abuse in the British

papers. Their hesitancy about launching war was characterised as cowardice and treachery. Japan, for the same reason was on the receiving end of similar attacks in the USA. *Newsweek* summarised the conflict between Europe and the USA accurately when it fumed:

"But the shoddy allied performance has seriously damaged prospects for a quick march to Euro-federalism. It has reinforced America's role as the effective military and political leader of the west. It has solidified the 'special relationship' between the USA and Britain—and dampened expectations that Germany will emerge as a dominating political force. And it has assured Europe a place on the sidelines during efforts to bring stability to the Middle East after the war. Among the early casualties of the Gulf War is the dream of a new world order in which Europe would stand united and tall."

In fact the USA's dream was always that if Europe stood "united and tall" it would still stand subordinate, and largely obedient, to the USA. A united EC, under the economic sway of Germany in alliance with the more politically and diplomatically influential France, was a

threat to Bush's new world order. Inter-imperialist divisions are resurfacing now that the cold war is over. After the war, with the recession further weakening the US and British economies, these rivalries will sharpen.

The reassertion of American military and political dominance, on top of this growing economic rivalry, will place a massive contradiction at the centre of world politics.

Gorbachev's diplomatic efforts in trying to stop the Gulf War are a further indication of why Bush's "new world" is proving disorderly in the extreme.

Back in September Gorbachev, in return for aid from the USA, pledged full support for the hard line against Iraq. It seemed to accept the new world order on Bush's terms. But for the USSR there was a real belief that this order would be maintained through the UN, with the Soviets alongside the USA in the driving seat. The unfolding war showed that this was not the sort of order Bush had in mind.

As the allied war aims became clear Gorbachev faced a dilemma. If he endorsed them he could buy time for his beleaguered regime and its *perestroika* project. The price would be sacrificing the USSR's role as a world power. The USA would achieve the balance of power it wanted in the Middle East and the USSR would be a helpless bystander.

Important sections of the Soviet bureaucracy and army were not prepared to accept this. They recognised the danger to the USSR itself of a rampant US imperialism in the Gulf. As these so called "conservative" elements gained greater control of events in the Soviet Union—revealed by the crackdown in the Baltics and the "law and order"

campaign throughout the USSR—the imperialists changed their attitude to Gorbachev. While only a few are speaking of a "Cold War Mk II" many are expressing reservations about the value of maintaining unity with the USSR on the Gulf War. The Moscow summit meeting between Bush and Gorbachev was cancelled and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) have been put on ice.

The imperialists remain profoundly distrustful of the USSR because it remains, though utterly degenerated, a workers' state. True to the Stalinist theory of peaceful co-existence, the bureaucracy never intended to thwart imperialism's control of the region. Still less did it intend to assist the anti-imperialist struggle by providing concrete aid to Iraq or the Palestinians.

Rather the bureaucracy, as the war unfolded, tried to play the role of peace broker. It acted like a trade union official seeking to prevent an employer from avoiding consultation altogether by trying to force him to the negotiating table to quieten things down and stitch up a deal. The Stalinists put together a deal which didn't go as far as the USA wanted, but which would have completely preserved imperialist domination of the Middle East.

By following this line the Soviet bureaucracy had three goals. First to ensure that it was in a position to maintain its influence within the Arab world. Second, to satisfy the clamour amongst the "conservatives" for a break with the belligerent policies of the allies. Third, to remind imperialism that it is still a force to be reckoned with in world affairs.

By his efforts Gorbachev may have succeeded to some extent in achieving his first two goals. But US impe-

rialism's unified thumbs down to the peace package, despite its offer of an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait by Iraq, suggests that it is no longer prepared to sacrifice its ambitions in the Gulf region in order to pacify the USSR. This, combined with the potential for all manner of crises to erupt within the stricken Soviet Union itself, demonstrates how distant the world is from any new order of peace and stability.

So long as imperialism exists there can be no lasting order in the world. The hatred of the masses of the semi-colonial countries for their imperialist oppressors, the divisions between the imperialist oppressors themselves and the unresolved contradictions between imperialism and the USSR all preclude the stable new world order envisaged by Bush.

As the German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg said, when the German bosses proclaimed a new "order" after the smashing of the 1919 revolution:

"Order reigns in Paris!', 'Order reigns in Berlin!' This is how the reports of the guardians of 'order' read, every half-century, from one centre of the world historical struggle to the other. And the exulting 'victors' fail to notice that an order that must be maintained with periodic bloody slaughters is irresistibly approaching its historical destiny, its downfall."

The military hardware being unleashed on Iraq may well restore a temporary imperialist peace in the Middle East. But it will be an order achieved at gunpoint and as such not new, not civilised, not orderly or stable. Like the order proclaimed after the crushing of the German revolution it will be, to use Luxemburg's words, "an order built on sand". ■

Albania explodes



Hoxha takes a tumble

BY PAUL MORRIS

THE ITALIAN Communist Party (PCI) no longer exists. At its Congress in Rimini on 3 February it voted to become the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and replaced the hammer and sickle with an oak tree as its official symbol.

There remains within the PDS a Stalinist wing around Pietro Ingrao, which campaigned against the name change. This section is supported by about a third of the members of the PDS.

A smaller, more orthodox, Stalinist "left" led by Cossuta announced it would not participate in the PDS.

The left is not party leader Occhetto's only problem. There is a right wing group within the PDS which has a much more open project than Occhetto of unity with the Socialist Party and collaboration with the liberal wing of the Catholic Church. On the Gulf War it has taken a pro-sanctions line at odds with Occhetto's demand for an immediate ceasefire and Italian troop withdrawal.

The impetus for the name change came, ostensibly, from the events of 1989, when Stalinist regimes all over Eastern Europe collapsed. "Communism" was clearly a dirty word for the masses who had suffered forty years of repression at the hands of the Stalinist regimes. The Occhetto leadership pushed for a rapid name-change as a signal that the party had broken completely with the past—with both Stalinism and Bolshevism.

But the name change was only the final stage of a process which began long before 1989.

The political degeneration of the PCI began in the 1920s and was consolidated around the popular front strategy of Stalin's Comintern in the 1930s. Since then the PCI has pursued successive variations on the same theme—a strategic alliance with "democratic" sections of the Italian ruling class.

ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY The final curtain



New party—new problems for Occhetto

In the 1970s, under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer the PCI pioneered "Eurocommunism". Behind the smokescreen of "renewing" and "democratising" communism the Italian party fashioned a new orthodoxy aimed at placating the hostility of the Italian ruling class. It criticised the Warsaw Pact intervention into Czechoslovakia, distanced itself from the USSR and

accepted Italian membership of NATO.

In 1976 it made its "historic compromise" with the Christian Democratic Party. In return for an agreement that the PCI would be "consulted" about important questions the Stalinists agreed to keep the bourgeois coalition government of Andreotti in power. It backed his anti-working class austerity package

BY RICHARD BRENNER

ALBANIA, THE last hard-line Stalinist state in Eastern Europe, has been convulsed by mass demonstrations and riots against its undemocratic and tyrannical regime, opening up the prospect of a political revolutionary crisis. A thirty foot high bronze statue of the former dictator Enver Hoxha was torn down by demonstrators on 20 February, symbolising the intense hatred of Stalinism felt by the country's students and youth.

Hoxha ruled Albania with a rod of iron for forty years until his death in 1985. His regime was an obscene anti-working class despotism. Hoxha remained faithful to Stalin, refusing to denounce him even after Khrushchev's secret speech. Within the top ranks of the party bureaucracy he settled all disputes with dissenters by shooting them at Central Committee meetings.

Check

Hoxha cut Albania off from the rest of the world, and kept his people in check through countless major and petty restrictions on every aspect of their lives. His rule was enforced by the hated Sigurimi secret service. An intense state sponsored campaign of patriotism and leader-worship was combined with a denial of democratic rights for the working class and peasantry. The result was that Albania, particularly after its diplomatic split with China, remained a grossly underdeveloped and backward country.

Since Hoxha's death, the Sta-

linist bureaucracy has remained in power through its party, the Albanian Party of Labour (APL).

Hoxha's nominated successor, President Ramiz Alia, had hoped to stimulate economic growth through a limited thaw in relations with the outside world. But developments in Eastern Europe, particularly the revolution in hard-line Romania, struck fear into the hearts of the Albanian bureaucracy. An exodus of Albanians to Greece and Germany and a growth of public opposition to the APL culminated in large anti-government demonstrations last December.

Reforms

Desperate to avoid the fate of Romanian dictator Ceausescu, Alia introduced a number of reforms designed to take the heat out of the opposition movement. Elections were promised for 31 March, a new opposition Democratic Party was founded, striking workers were awarded pay rises, and restrictions on travel and religion were eased.

These unprecedented changes led to flourishing debate about the country's future, particularly amongst the students. This reached the stage where many were beginning to question the legacy of Hoxha himself. The APL could not allow this to continue, as the entire legitimacy of its continued rule rests on the maintenance of the Hoxha cult and on the Stalinist policies he introduced. True to their traditions, the APL leadership issued a decree banning all discussion of Enver Hoxha whatsoever.

The students responded to this with a boycott of lessons and a hunger strike with the symbolic aim of removing Hoxha's name from the official title of the university in the capital, Tirana. Large demonstrations followed and met with a brutal response from police who opened fire on crowds and sealed off the elite area known as "the Block" where the privileged bureaucracy live. Hoxha's statue came down but a number of demonstrators were killed.

Now there is a serious danger of a bureaucratic clampdown. Alia has threatened to declare martial law, and military leaders have established a sinister "Commission for the Defence of the Interests of the Homeland", which has pledged allegiance to Alia only if he promises to take stern action against "vandals". A massacre similar to the events in Peking in 1989 is a distinct possibility.

Discredits

The students' hatred of Hoxha's legacy is justified. Stalinism blocks the road to genuine socialism and working class power. Its very existence breeds the illusion that anything, even capitalism, would be better than the misery of monolithic dictatorship. It discredits the very idea of socialism in the eyes of millions.

To prevent the potential murderous backlash and to take their struggles forward Albanian workers and youth need to form defence organisations to resist police, army and Sigurimi terror. They need to build democratic councils to co-ordinate strike action. They should fraternise with soldiers with the aim of organising an armed uprising to destroy the rule of the APL.

They must replace it not with the squalor of the market and private ownership, which will leave Albania even more poverty stricken, but democratic planning and workers' power. ■

against the working class and demobilised resistance.

After the death of Berlinguer and the evident failure of Eurocommunism to ingratiate the PCI with the bosses the party turned further to the right. It renounced all its political differences with Italian social democracy. It proclaimed itself an "integral party of the European left"—Stalinist double speak for an integral party of Italian capitalism, loyal to Rome not Moscow.

The name-change at the Rimini conference merely gave the right name to a party which has dragged the label "Communist" through the mud for decades.

On the other hand the existence of the Ingrao group still inside the PDS and Occhetto's own line on the Gulf has prompted the Christian Democrats and their "socialist" ally Bettino Craxi to hang back from giving the PDS a clean, capitalist, bill of health. Craxi declared that there was "no prospect" of a PDS coalition with the Socialist Party and urged the Socialist International not to admit the former CP.

It is necessary to relate to the demands and illusions of the militant workers who feel betrayed by the PCI's metamorphosis into the PDS, especially those who have left the party in disgust. But Trotskyists will not shed any tears at the party's abandonment of the last shreds of anti-capitalist rhetoric.

Rhetoric is all it was. The PCI long ago, and in the most crucial situations, proved itself a *bourgeois workers' party*, a party whose anti-capitalist words were designed only to blind millions of workers to its pro-capitalist deeds. ■

USSR

"...the slave life of women"

The promised equality of women in the Soviet Union has not been attained. In your view, what are the main areas in which working women face sexual discrimination?

First let me give a concrete example from our factory. We have technical brigades which are led by the four most highly qualified workers. Even though the work of the leaders is a lot less physically demanding than the work of the women in the brigade, it is impossible for a woman to become the leader.

In the ten years that I have been working in this factory, it has only happened to a woman once—and her husband was the director of the factory.

To become a boss or a chief engineer anywhere, the brightest woman has to be at least ten times as smart as the brightest man.

How is work in the home divided between men and women?

In principle there is no such thing as "housework" because it is taken for granted. By tradition it is a thing for the woman. Because women use up so much energy through hard physical labour at work, they come home completely exhausted and their husbands have no choice but to do things themselves, or else they will have nothing to eat and would live in a filthy flat. That is not a result of women having fought for their rights at all, but because they simply can't do any more.

There are many women who get divorced because they can't cope with the double burden any longer. But this then creates new problems. The children stay with the mother in any case, and the most difficult problem is how to turn one flat into two. It means finding someone who would like a bigger flat and can swap it for two smaller flats. That is extremely difficult and can take years, so that people who are divorced are frequently forced to carry on living together.

The Social Democrats, Patriots and Radicals (liberals) have come up with the new idea that women should be withdrawn from production and should stay at home. This is supposed to solve two problems in one blow.

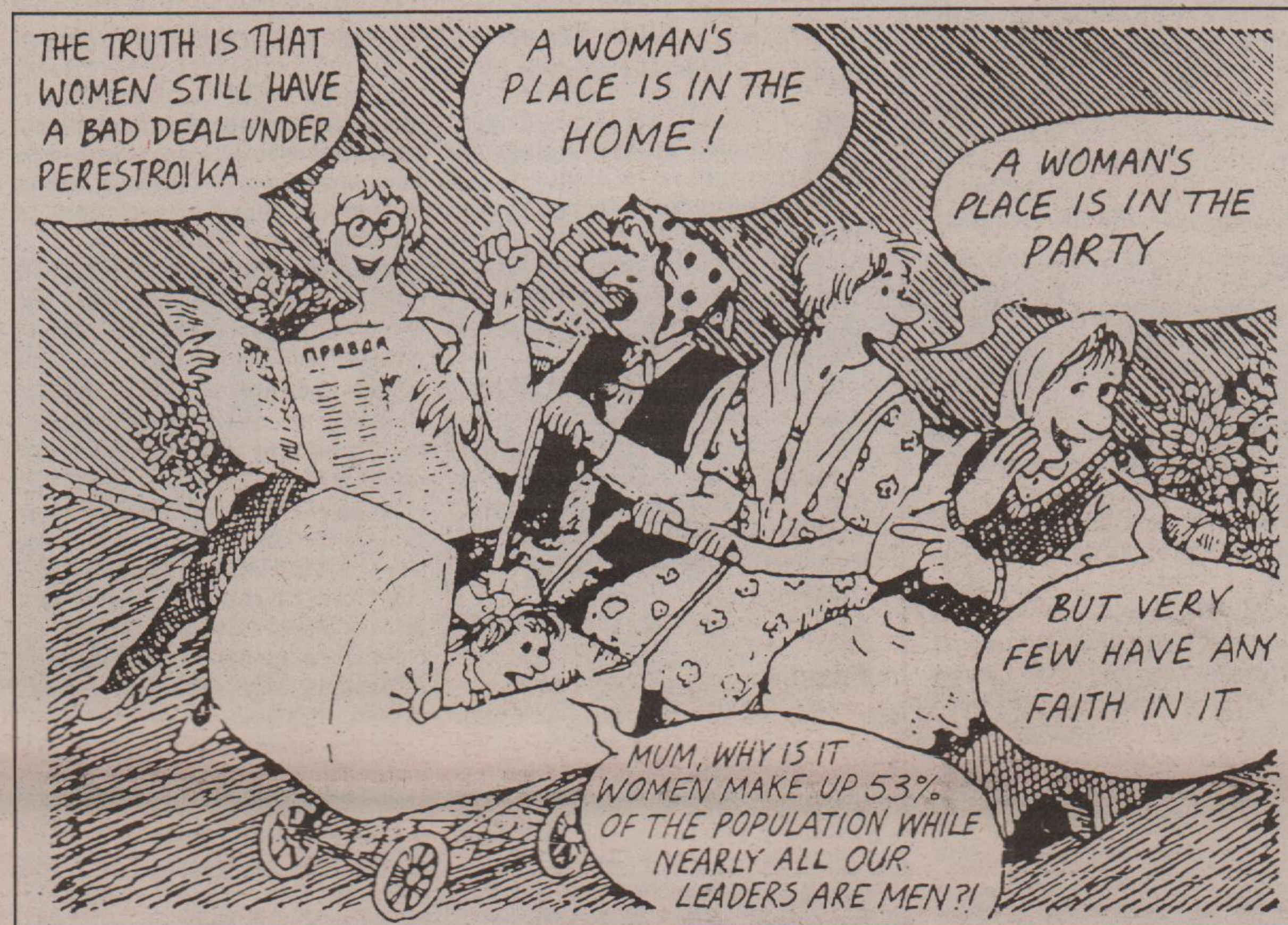
Families are supposed to function better and the problem of unemployment is to be solved at women's expense. But up to now not one political party has asked women what they actually want. Women don't want to leave the workplaces as long as there is no alternative for them, as long as there is no choice. Women must be economically independent.

There can only be freedom for women when they have the possibility of choosing, for whatever reason, whether they want to just stay at home and do housework. They must decide this themselves.

That is the aim of emancipation, that their lives are not dependent on their husbands. When a woman decides to separate from a man it should not mean personal and social catastrophe. Separation should not automatically mean that the woman suffers a drop in her living standards.

The state must at last recognise that it has a duty to help women.

The crisis in the Soviet Union has intensified the daily hardships of women workers, but it has also opened up opportunities for women to begin to organise. Representatives of the LRCI interviewed Natasha, a worker in a Moscow food factory, in November 1990. This is an extract from the translated interview.*



Attempts have been made to prevent the independence of women from men, to make women sit at home, bear children, "so that the Russian nation doesn't die out"—an argument that I heard from someone recently. But women won't take that any more, you can't turn back the clock. Women want to have their own personalities and not be appendages of men.

What is the situation as far as social services like nurseries are concerned?

It's looking bad, above all because the nursery workers earn next to nothing. They are very overworked, they are hardly qualified and because of the low pay they get

Interview

funds—the investment fund, the social fund and the wages fund. Everything taken out of the social fund goes towards the costs of building homes, holidays etc. Because the housing problem is so great, a massive contradiction is developing between funding the nurseries and funding housing programmes.

The demand for nursery places is so great that the office which allocates the places is besieged by women. They stand in the queue,

What about personal relationships?

Marital relations in the Soviet Union differ greatly according to national and social tradition. For a woman who lives in a village the situation is almost untenable if she isn't married by the age of 25. A woman who lives in the countryside and has "free" sex is not safe, even from physical attacks.

Women obviously have more freedom in the city. Here you can have children without being married and not face such problems. In the town they can disregard tradition, and these freedoms are spreading further out from the towns.

Of course there is a new wave of

"... up to now not one political party has asked women what they actually want. Women don't want to leave the workplaces as long as there is no alternative for them, as long as there is no choice."

the job by chance. When my children are there I don't feel that I have a minute's peace of mind. On the other hand, nurseries cost us very little.

In the new year [1991] nursery prices are supposed to be going up quite a bit in order to raise the pay of the nursery workers. But we can't bear the burden of this increase with our wages.

There is a proposal that it should cost 70 roubles per child. I can't imagine that we will each individually have to pay 70 roubles from our wages. It will probably be taken from the social fund of the workplaces.

To explain: the income of each enterprise is divided into three

crying and begging for a place for their child. The only women who can get a place in an all day nursery place are those who work from eight in the morning to five at night, five days a week, and have no grandmother who can look after the child.

The hardest time in a woman's life begins when the child goes to school. Because in the first year lessons are only until 12 noon, the child is alone for the rest of the day. There is the possibility of a day group, but there is exactly the same struggle for these as for places in nurseries. Relations between parents and children become more and more strained because the children are actually neglected.

Christian weddings, but at the moment these are only superficial phenomena, it doesn't mean that there is a real return to tradition. But in the last decades only the surface signs of tradition were destroyed, and traditional structures like the slave-life of women in the family have not been destroyed. As long as the whole structure is not changed, a return to these superficial forms is possible.

What about the availability of contraception?

You can't get contraceptives. Abortions are carried out without anaesthetic. It is pure humiliation. In a way women have adapted to these conditions, and they tolerate

them because they have no idea that it could be any different.

Funnily enough, when the question of contraception is raised, it's mainly by men. The problem puts women under so much stress that on the one hand it gets on their nerves and on the other hand they can't have normal sexual relations. So even the men begin to notice the consequences.

The way they carry out abortions makes you feel like cattle, and the way that women's illnesses in general are dealt with is thoroughly degrading and painful. There are no pain-killers. Of course such poor treatment of women also has its effect on men and children.

There is still moral pressure not to raise issues like contraception openly. There are massive moral protests against TV broadcasts or newspapers that deal with the question. But it is the problems that are immoral—how can it be immoral to talk about them!

We have to shout about it whenever we can. We have to shout about it because society has made itself so deaf to these problems. They have been pushed aside to such an extent that it is entirely impossible to have a normal discussion about the issues.

Are there any roots of a women's movement? What significance do the Women's Councils have?

In Lithuania there is a women's movement. Here [in Moscow] there is the Committee of Soviet Women, but no-one knows why it exists.

The Women's Councils existed before and there is an attempt to revive them but it won't come to much. Whenever a woman goes somewhere with a problem, whether it's to the doctor, to the boss or whatever, they always say: "that's your problem, you just shouldn't have been allowed to have children". The activation of the Women's Councils is an attempt to push these problems away, and women are supposed to come together and solve the problems themselves. But these Women's Councils have no real power.

The trade unions, which on the face of it are supposed to be concerned with these things, in fact concern themselves with them as little as they do with all the other matters which they should deal with. There is neither a party nor a movement that has really grasped the issue.

Women are always the ones causing trouble, the fifth wheel on the chariot. Whenever someone finally finds an ideal solution to something, then along come the women and don't fit in with the proposals. They don't fit in to politics, they don't fit in to production, they are the troublemakers.

I believe that a political movement which placed the woman question at the centre of its priorities could solve all other problems more easily, because it would be able to have a much more global comprehension of politics. ■

* The transcript of the complete interview will appear in the next edition of *Trotskyist International*.



the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST TENDENCY (USA)

Fighting against Bush's war

ON THE night the ground offensive began 3,000 people demonstrated in downtown San Francisco. It was an angry demonstration and there were several arrests. The demonstration was called by the Emergency Committee to Stop the War in the Middle East and supported by the other anti-war coalitions. The protesters gave pro-war demonstrators who had turned out to oppose the march a hard time.

The RTT initiated a resolution at Local 790 of the Service Employees International Union which organises city workers in San Francisco's Bay Area. The resolution called for a ballot on a one day protest strike in response to Mayor Agnos who proposed laying off city workers to pay for the cost of damages in the city resulting from clashes on previous anti-war demos.

The RTT called for the defence of Iraq, for US workers to refuse to pay the cost of the war, and to defend Arabs, Arab Americans and the Muslim community.

The RTT is the only group intervening in the Joint Mobilisation (JM) against the war, calling for it to orientate to the workers' movement, to organise strike action to force withdrawal of the troops—a demand consistently opposed by the JM leadership—Socialist Action (SA) and the Communist Party.

SA and the CP prefer to preside over ever smaller demonstrations, picnics and music events as a means of protesting against the war.

The RTT argued against the proposal being put to the all USA anti-war conference held in Washington on 23 February to support the "ceasefire" demand. The ceasefire was an attempt by the Soviet bureaucracy to deliver Kuwait to the USA without a ground war.

The Washington conference reaffirmed the need to focus on bringing the troops back now and rejected the ceasefire perspective.

In the Bay Area during February there have been several "teach-ins" every week organised on campuses such as Berkeley, San Francisco State University and local neighbourhood groups from Oakland to San José.

At one of the teach-ins, at Marina Middle School, Democratic representative Nancy Pelosi spoke to a sceptical and increasingly hostile crowd of 400, and was booed and heckled for abandoning her initial opposition to the House resolution authorising the war. This was just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the widespread disgust in the Bay Area at the US actions in the Gulf.

In response to the escalation of the war the RTT produced an eight page supplement to *International Trotskyist* No 2. The publication was so successful that the RTT now plans to produce *International Trotskyist* bi-monthly to help build the LRCI's fraternal group in the USA. ■

COMMUNIST LEFT (NEW ZEALAND)

On the streets against the slaughter

THE LRCI is currently involved in close discussions with the Communist Left of New Zealand. In the acid test of war the line taken by the New Zealand comrades and the vigorous action they have pursued against the war have helped take those discussions a big step forward.

The main organisation co-ordinating anti-war activity in New Zealand is the Auckland Gulf Crisis Committee. This includes the trade unions' (CTU) Peace Committee, the Communist Party, the Communist League (CL—an ex-Trotskyist group), the CLNZ, as well as CND and Greenpeace.

Against a coalition of the pacifists, Stalinists and the CL, the CLNZ won the Committee to opposition to sanctions and to the war. The right wing struck back with a "broad" statement of aims and called a demonstration for 22 March! After big demos and pickets in December and January calling a demo so late (when the war might be over) was part of the pacifists' and Stalinists' attempt to push the Committee to the right.

While the CLNZ worked hard to get pickets organised when the ground war began the other forces in the Committee refused to mobilise and the protests were smaller than they should have been. Faced with the retreat by the Committee the CLNZ, together with Students Against War in the Gulf and other left forces (though not the CL), are committed to galvanising the anti-war movement by building a big anti-imperialist contingent on the planned demo, as well as building for actions against the war in the immediate days and weeks ahead.

In the meetings and teach-ins that have taken place the CLNZ have been able to address the people mobilised against the war, particularly the youth with a clear revolutionary and anti-imperialist message. The case for supporting victory to Iraq has been well received at these meetings. ■

The LRCI
ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)
The Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (USA) is a sympathising section.
Poder Obrero-OCIR (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

ARAB REGIMES

Living in fear of mass action

The outbreak of the war in the Gulf brought hundreds of thousands of Arab and Muslim workers out on the streets in protest. Nick Stone examines the political consequences for the region

A JORDANIAN taxi driver summed up the feelings of many when he said:

"We like Saddam because he is a man of his word: he stood up to the Kuwaiti cheaters and now he is standing up to foreign domination and US intervention in the Arab world."

George Bush and John Major want us to believe the imperialist coalition ranged against Iraq has the support of the Arab masses in their desire to deliver the region up from the "Hitler" of the Middle East. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Fragile

The coalition is fragile and has been engineered at great cost to the USA. Egypt, the most "loyal" of the allied states, has been well rewarded for its loyalty, with \$14 billion worth of debts written off.

The demonstrations across the region which followed the bombing of Baghdad showed the real feelings of the Arab masses towards the presence of western forces in the Gulf. This anger threatens to tear apart the coalition. It even has the potential to unseat many of the region's pro-imperialist rulers.

In Jordan, there are daily pro-Iraqi demonstrations and thousands are enlisting to fight in Saddam's army. Most of the protests are dominated by Islamic organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood, or by Palestinian radicals who have poured into Jordan as a result of the military crackdown and 24 hour curfew in the Occupied Territories, and the Allied bombing of Kuwait.

Jordan has been hit hard by the declining growth rates of other regional economies such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia as oil revenues stagnated. Estimated losses due to sanctions amount to an additional \$1.5 billion. Workers in Jordan face high unemployment (20%) and bear the brunt of IMF imposed austerity measures, while many Kuwaitis who holiday in Jordan flaunt their wealth, with their BMWs and Mercedes parked outside every luxury hotel in Amman.

Desperate

King Hussein, desperate for Western aid, is nevertheless pressured by the size of the pro-Saddam mobilisations. Soon after the bombing campaign began, parliament demanded that all Arab resources and armies be handed over to Saddam. As most Jordanians see it, the Kuwaiti regime deliberately over-produced oil quotas to keep the price of world oil down to aid the US and European economies where they have heavy investments.

The Occupied Territories have been under curfew since 16 Janu-

ary. There are severe food shortages. Palestinians are allowed to shop once every three days, but as farmers cannot harvest there is nothing to buy. Palestinians who work in Israel have been prevented from travelling and have no income whatsoever. Only 173,000 gas masks have been made available to the 1.5 million Palestinians. Political prisoners have been denied masks or given masks without filters.

None of this has passed without resistance. In the run-up to war, the Unified National Command of the Uprising (UNCU)—the clandestine leadership of the *Intifada*—called for continuous mass demonstrations and attacks on Israeli armed forces.

In one instance, Palestinian women in a West Bank village used torches to spell the letters PLO on a hill near the village. A UNCU statement condemned US-led plans to "destroy Iraq" and called on Syria and Egypt to break from the coalition "before it is too late, for the judgement of people is harsh, and the people do not forgive".

In Egypt, the *Al Ahali* newspaper reported that thousands of Egyptians are volunteering for the Iraqi army. The Ministry of National Education has extended school and university vacations to quell student demonstrations in support of Iraq. The Muslim Brotherhood has demanded the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from the Gulf.

Immediate

Opposition groups have drawn up an eight point programme demanding an immediate end to the war and the replacement of Iraqi troops in Kuwait by an Arab peace-keeping force. Islamic youth organisations have issued a call-to-arms against the USA. In response, President Mubarak has deployed thousands of riot police to attempt to drive demonstrators off the streets.

In Tunisia, demonstrations in support of Iraq were organised by trade unions. Over 280 committees to support Iraq have been set up.

In Algeria, on 18 January over 300,000 took to the streets. Two weeks later 60,000 marched and, at the end of February merchants called a general strike and stopped all trading. Three hundred doctors have volunteered to go to Iraq to help Saddam's war effort.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has consolidated itself as the leading force in the anti-war protests. Secular parties like the Communist Party and the Socialist Party of Workers (affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International), along with the General Union of Algerian Workers, have tailed the fundamentalists.

All opposition groups are for an

immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of US troops. The Algerian president Chadli Benjedid, facing calls from the FIS to resign, has come out with a pro-Iraqi line. But he represents the contradiction of most of the region's rulers—caught between the pressure of their own people and the desire to win aid and credits from the imperialist countries.

The majority of protests across the region have been led by Arab nationalists and Islamic fundamentalists, with the working class playing only a subordinate role. It is the task of revolutionaries to combat the influence of these false friends of the Arab masses while striving to mobilise the full strength of the North African working class to give a lead to the anti-imperialist struggle. Recent events in Morocco indicate the potential such a strategy holds.

Troops

King Hassan of Morocco deployed troops to Saudi Arabia as part of the coalition at the start of the conflict. With the commencement of the war all demonstrations were banned, schools and universities were closed and armed troops moved through the streets. Political meetings were broken up and a pro-Iraqi demonstration was attacked. On 25 January Moroccan workers staged a general strike in support of Iraq. The strike was solid.

Faced with the threat of this strike King Hassan panicked and declared the day a holiday for "contemplation, discipline and responsibility". He hoped that this move would contain the masses' anger and help preserve his regime.

It has simply enthused the Moroccan people for further action. On 3 February 300,000 marched in Rabat, the capital, in the biggest demonstration the country had seen since 1956 when independence was granted.

The Moroccan trade union movement is one of the most powerful in the region, and had already tested its strength against the regime in December with a general strike against price rises. Hassan has already begun to retreat, referring to Saddam as "my brother".

The task of the workers and peasants of the Middle East is to help Iraq defeat imperialism. Whilst mass pressure on the Arab regimes can force them into neutrality or even half-hearted support for Iraq, mass action will send the rulers running to their imperialist protectors.

The road to driving imperialism from the Middle East lies over the corpses of the Hassan, Benjedid and Mubarak regimes.

As the experience of Iran shows, to really free their countries from the grip of imperialism, the masses have to break from the Islamic fundamentalists and bourgeois nationalists. They must rise with anti-imperialism and socialism inscribed on their banners.

Forward to the socialist federation of the Middle East! ■

SOUTH AFRICA

A just settlement?

DE KLERK promised the end of legal apartheid in his speech on 1 February. He held out the prospect of the repeal of the Land Acts, the Group Areas Act and the key Population Registration Act. The implementation of these reforms, however, will depend on the regime's success in extracting ever more concessions from the ANC during negotiations.

The "orderly transition" that De Klerk wants will prevent any serious challenge to existing patterns of ownership and control of wealth. The present, overwhelmingly white, ruling class will retain all of its wealth, power and privilege. Millions of black workers and rural poor will continue to face systematic racial discrimination, inequality, oppression and exploitation.

The repeal of the apartheid laws would mean an end to the legal restrictions on the black majority population. These restrictions had reserved 87% of the land for whites along with access to the best schools, health care and housing. But without a huge redistribution of wealth, the end of the legal restrictions would change little in practice.

Only the wealthier sections of the black community would be able to buy land. In the urban areas, scrapping the Group Areas Act—which is already breaking down in places—will not solve the huge housing problem. The urban population has almost doubled in the last decade and an estimated 7.5 million live in shacks rather than proper houses.

Nor would the reforms provide the huge resources needed to overcome the inequalities which leave the infant mortality rate ten times higher for black Africans than for whites. Formal reforms in education will not alter the more than 40:1 pupil teacher ratio in black schools which prevents little more than a third of black candidates matriculating.

There can be no real and lasting progress for the black majority while wealth is concentrated in so few, predominantly white, hands. Four giant monopolies dominate

Negotiations in South Africa between the African National Congress and De Klerk's National Party government have remained officially "talks about talks". In reality the future of "post-apartheid" South Africa is being decided over the heads of the masses. The reactionary nature of the proposed settlement is clear, as Lesley Day explains.

the economy. Their very existence is an obstacle to a just settlement.

Any interim government that emerges from the secret talks will preside over the change to majority rule. It will be a power sharing government primarily of the ANC and the National Party. The constitution that De Klerk wants to see is one in which white property rights are made sacrosanct, even when the interim government gives

way to a black majority government. He wants a mechanism, such as a second chamber, by which white ruling class interests can use to veto further change.

A second chamber along these lines will be difficult to achieve. The mass movement—the ANC's base—is committed wholeheartedly to the principle of one person one vote in a unitary constitution. But De Klerk is already working

hard to counter this democratic pressure from the masses. For example, the announcement that he is prepared to scrap the Population Registration Act does not mean the end of separate voters' rolls. He wants "temporary transitional measures" which would mean the existing population would still be categorised. Only new births would be excluded.

Even if the reform went further

the way is still open for creating some sort of states' representation which would use existing boundaries and inequalities.

The ANC have been bending over backwards to allay the fears of the white ruling class in the process of stitching up a settlement. Since the publication of the Constitutional Guidelines two years ago the ANC has officially been committed to a "mixed economy", that is, a capitalist economy.

The deliberately vague phrasing of the old Freedom Charter meant that its declarations about wealth and land belonging to "the people" could be interpreted in many ways.

One task of the ANC leadership over the last period has been to complete its reinterpretation, away from wholesale nationalisation towards merely abolishing racial bars on land and property ownership, and preserving some element of state ownership of the infrastructural services.

On the key question of who controls the armed forces that oversee the settlement, the ANC has also betrayed the interests of the black masses. Not only does armed power rest firmly in the hands of the existing regime, but the ANC has abandoned any pretence of building an alternative military force that could defend the masses from attack by the state forces.

This whole train of events confirms that a reactionary settlement was in preparation from the very beginning of the negotiation process in the Autumn of 1989. Socialists should have opposed the negotiations from the start.

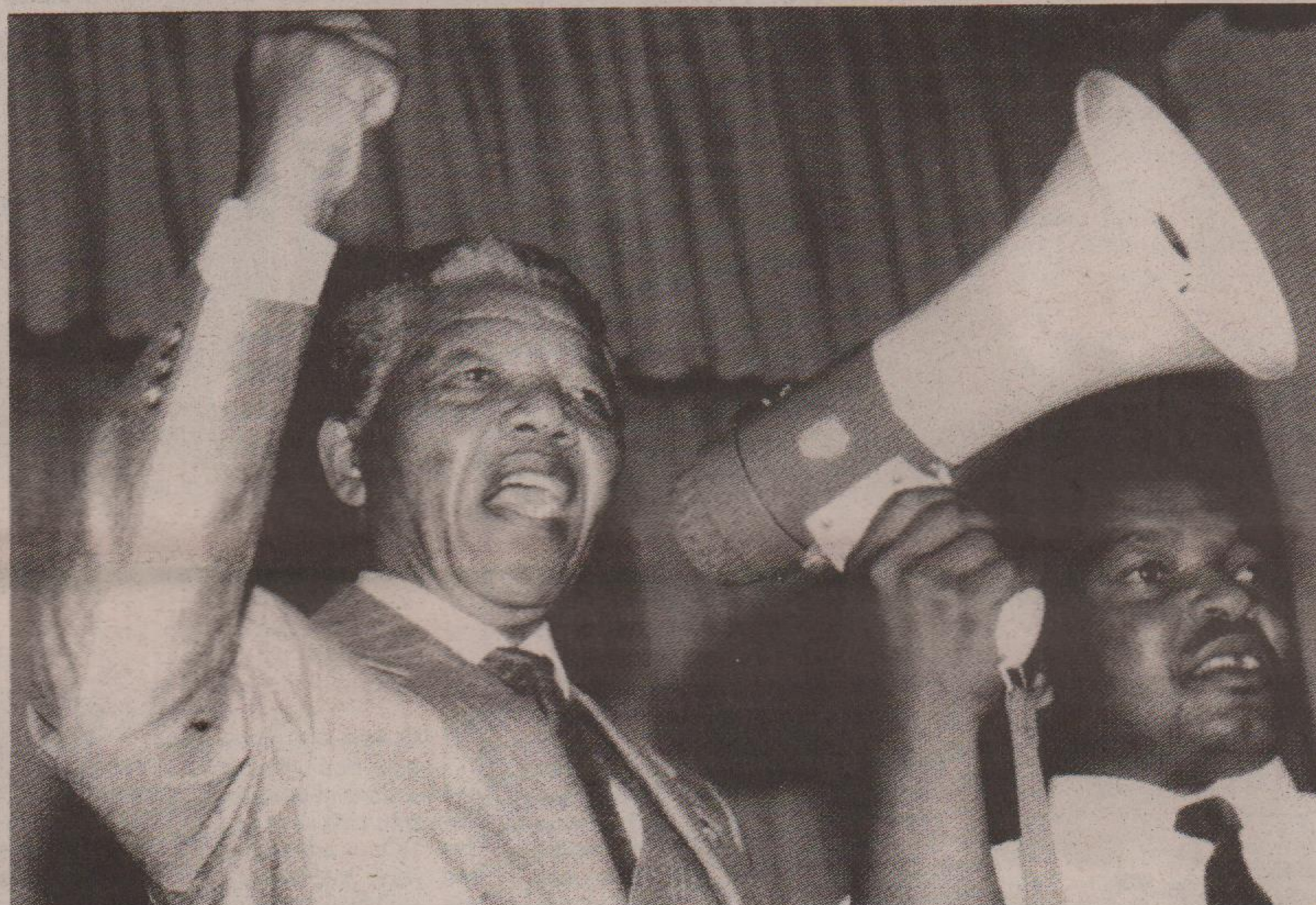
While the ANC leaders must still be called to account by their mass base through demands that the secrecy around the talks be lifted and no deals struck, the urgent task now is to counterpose a revolutionary solution to the emerging sell out.

The masses should have their own voice in a genuinely sovereign constituent assembly—not one convened under the shadow of the state forces after a deal is done with the white rulers. To guarantee that such a constituent assembly does not become a weapon against the interests of the black masses, workers' councils and a workers' militia need to be built to convene and defend it.

This must be fought for in the teeth of opposition from the Pretoria regime and the ANC. Both fear that such an assembly, genuinely representing the masses, would open up the prospect of revolutionary change.

Events have also proved the need for an independent revolutionary workers' party which can chart a path to real political and economic power for the masses. The South African Communist Party, which many trade unionists and socialists hoped would help preserve an independent working class voice, has maintained its alliance with the ANC throughout the retreat. Indeed it has been a key force, along with its allies in the leadership of the union federation—COSATU, in leading that retreat.

A revolutionary party would need to fight for a programme that linked action needed on all of the immediate political and economic questions facing the masses with the measures needed to destroy both apartheid and "post-apartheid" capitalism root and branch. ■



No more calls to arms

ANC betrayal

OVER THE course of a year the ANC has been engaged in a great betrayal of the black masses in South Africa. It has pursued a course of concessions to De Klerk, and manoeuvres to get its supporters to swallow those concessions.

The Groote Schuur talks last April were followed by the "Pretoria Minute" in August when the ANC agreed to abandon the armed struggle against the apartheid regime. This was against a backdrop of continuing violence, fomented by Pretoria, involving attacks by supporters of Buthelezi's Inkatha on ANC/UDF supporters.

The government's aim was to weaken the ANC's bargaining position by forcing it to allow Buthelezi into the negotiations. At the same time, De Klerk wanted the ANC to take responsibility for policing its own supporters—not by having its own security apparatus, but by making it accept state policing and enforcing "peace" between Congress militants and Inkatha.

Continuing repression—the Emergency Regulations and many political prisoners remain in jail—made it difficult for the ANC leadership to win support for its retreat. The crack-down was so severe that the leadership had to announce support for community self-defence. There was even dissent inside the leadership when Mac Maharaj resigned in December, arguing that the Execu-

tive had failed to give him sufficient support when he was jailed and tortured in the summer. By the time of the December Consultative Conference there was considerable unrest amongst militants.

Many critical voices were raised at the Conference. The leadership came under fire for poor organisation and failing to build real base structures. Many delegates were sympathetic to the position originally voiced last spring by the Youth League, whose members are being rounded up by the authorities to this day, that there should be no talks with Buthelezi.

There was concern that the ANC was giving away too much. "If the Pretoria Minute had been put the vote it would certainly have been defeated", reported *New Nation*. In the end the Conference insisted on a deadline—30 April—for serious movement from the government including the release of political prisoners. If this was not met the ANC was to withdraw from the peace process. The leadership was strictly forbidden to engage in secret negotiations.

But as soon as the Conference was behind it, the ANC leaders continued their manoeuvres. Mandela and De Klerk began discussing a proposal for all-party talks. On 9 January the ANC issued a statement calling for such talks. By 29 January a top level ANC delegation was meeting Inkatha representa-

tives and announcing a "peace" deal. On 12 February ANC representatives agreed to reinterpret the Pretoria Minute. Rather than a simple ceasefire it agreed to stop recruiting and training for MK, the armed wing. In return, prisoners would be released by 30 April.

The concessions of the last two months are highly significant. While MK has not posed a serious military challenge to the regime, the new agreement amounts to a promise not to arm or train any defence organisations.

It leaves communities defenceless against state or other right wing forces. It confirms that the apartheid regime will retain control of armed force throughout the settlement process.

The All Party Convention (APC) will be yet another vehicle for stitching up a deal over the heads of the majority. It is to take place before any Constituent Assembly is called. It would be, according to ANC leader Mohammed Valli Moosa, "a summit not an elected body, so organisations would be represented according to their strength".

Its tasks would be to "set out the broad principles" of the constitution, determine the make up of a constituent assembly and set up an interim government. In other words, by the time a constituent assembly is called, the shape of the settlement will be decided and the assembly will effectively act as a

rubber stamp.

Worse, such an assembly might not be convened at all. Nelson Mandela revealed that there was a real possibility of the APC taking the place of a constituent assembly. He told *New Nation*:

"All that we have said is that, if the masses of the people want the All-Party Congress to be a constituent assembly—it depends on them."

And how will Mandela and the other ANC members decide that this is what the masses want? On all issues the leadership has proved that it regards itself as the voice of the masses, not their accountable servant. If they feel that the APC would give them a share in power then it is these leaders who will decide the APC should be the assembly. As Mandela put it in the same interview:

"You must not fear to lead. Where you feel that some grave mistake is being committed . . . you must come out firmly and say: here I put my foot down, I am not going to shift."

This is a declaration that Mandela and the ANC leadership know what is best for the masses and will act accordingly. It is a declaration that if they believe selling the APC as a constituent assembly is the best deal they can get then they will impose it on the masses.

This whole shabby balance sheet of the ANC's role in the negotiations should serve as a warning to the millions of blacks who have looked to it as the force that will bring democracy and economic justice to South Africa. It has already proved that it will sell the masses short. It must not be given any more room to manoeuvre. End the negotiations now!

Dear Jeff,

We had yet another very heated argument on the coach down to last week's Gulf demo. Quite possibly our row generated more heat than light and I accept my share of the blame for that.

But the matter at the heart of our disagreement is of crucial importance—how to build a principled, effective anti-war movement capable of mobilising the working class.

I think it's worth pursuing my side of the argument in this form because you are a serious, honest socialist (I wouldn't necessarily say the same about the organisation to which you belong) and your views are fairly typical of quite a few would-be "revolutionary" organisations and individuals.

Your case, as I understand it, can be roughly summarised as follows: the basis of any principled anti-war movement has to be an understanding that the war is an act of "naked imperialist aggression". It therefore follows that slogans such as "Stop the War" or even "Troops Out Now" are inadequate. A principled campaign has to be based upon clear slogans along the lines of "Victory to Iraq",

**workers
power**

Dear Jim,

We read with some amusement your "Open Letter to an Honest Sectarian" (*Socialist Organiser* No 474). This must be one of the only "open" letters to appear on the left that keeps secret from its readers the organisation being argued against! They certainly would not have guessed it was *Workers Power* given that Denham's account of our positions on the Iraq War is completely distorted.

Denham claims our position on the Gulf War is that a campaign built on slogans such as "Stop the War" and "Troops Out Now" is "inadequate", that we demand as a precondition for joining a campaign that workers agree to "Victory to Iraq", "No to Sanctions" etc.

A quick look at our newspaper proves this to be false. But this is obviously too much in the way of research for a journalist of the calibre of our Jim. Let us make it easy for him. *Workers Power* 139 February 1991 page 6:

"Workers Power believes it is possible to build a principled and united movement against the war around three key slogans:

- Stop the war against Iraq,
- Imperialist troops out of the Gulf,
- Defend Arab and Muslim communities against internment, deportation and racist attack."

In fact our difference is not about what slogans to build a mass campaign against the war on. We, like *Socialist Organiser*, think it is necessary to unite with workers willing to take action against war to get the troops out; those who do not necessarily agree with us about being for the defeat of our own imperialism, being for the victory for Iraq etc.

Where we differ with *Socialist Organiser* is that, like Lenin on the outbreak of the first World War, we argue for the defeat of our own ruling class and its army however unpopular that makes us temporarily in Britain. *Socialist Organiser* on the other hand, as on so many other issues, wants to adapt its politics, to swim along with the stream, so as not to appear "wild" and "nutty". Lenin had a name for this practice—opportunism.

Denham also accuses us of "giving support to petit bourgeois nationalism". Why? Because according to Denham we show "astounding indifference" to the fascistic treatment

On 6 February *Socialist Organiser* printed Jim Denham's "Open letter to an honest sectarian". Addressed to a *Workers Power* supporter in Birmingham, it completely failed to mention the organisation it was aimed at! Nevertheless Denham's letter deals with some important arguments, misconceptions and slanders within the anti-war movement. **John McKee** replies for *Workers Power*.

Open letter to an honest sectarian

"No to Sanctions, Break the Blockade! Send unconditional Aid to Iraq". In other words, we need an explicitly "anti-imperialist" campaign.

I think we can agree that the US/British side in the war are behaving in fairly classic "imperialist" fashion and that Iraq, even under Saddam Hussein, has a right to defend itself from invasion and subjugation. I know that we agree about the role of the UN in all this and that sanctions were never seri-

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

ously intended as an alternative to war but as a preparation for it.

Our disagreement comes on the matter of whether an acceptance of this analysis must be the basis of the campaign—indeed, a precondition for joining it.

Whether we like it or not, most

socialist-minded workers, who might naturally be inclined to oppose the war, do not accept our analysis. Many have illusions in the UN and sanctions; many more believe "something has to be done about Saddam Hussein".

I'm not talking about caricature *Sun* readers here; I mean the mass of honest, serious workers who think about the issues and are not particularly impressed by fancy sloganising and rhetoric about "imperial-

ism". These are the people we must win over if a real anti-war movement, capable of doing something to stop the war, is to be built.

Such people are not only not impressed by sloganising and rhetoric: they are positively repelled by it. They have genuine doubts and worries that need to be discussed, debated and—yes—even argued through. But just lecturing them about the evils of imperialism doesn't help here. And certainly, giving the impression that we give willy-nilly, blanket support to Saddam Hussein is guaranteed to drive them away.

Unfortunately, you and your comrades do exactly what I've described. You may satisfy your personal need to be ever-so "anti-imperialist" and "r-r-revolutionary" but to most workers you just make us all look like a bunch of bloody-thirsty, wild, nutty people.

And, actually such "anti-imperialist" posturing is not even genuine ultra-leftism (in the way, for instance, that syndicalist super-militancy is in industrial disputes); it's really a right wing deviation, giving support to petit bourgeois nationalism, and displaying an astounding indifference to such things as the fascistic treatment of the Kuwaitis—not to speak of the Iraqis!—by Saddam Hussein.

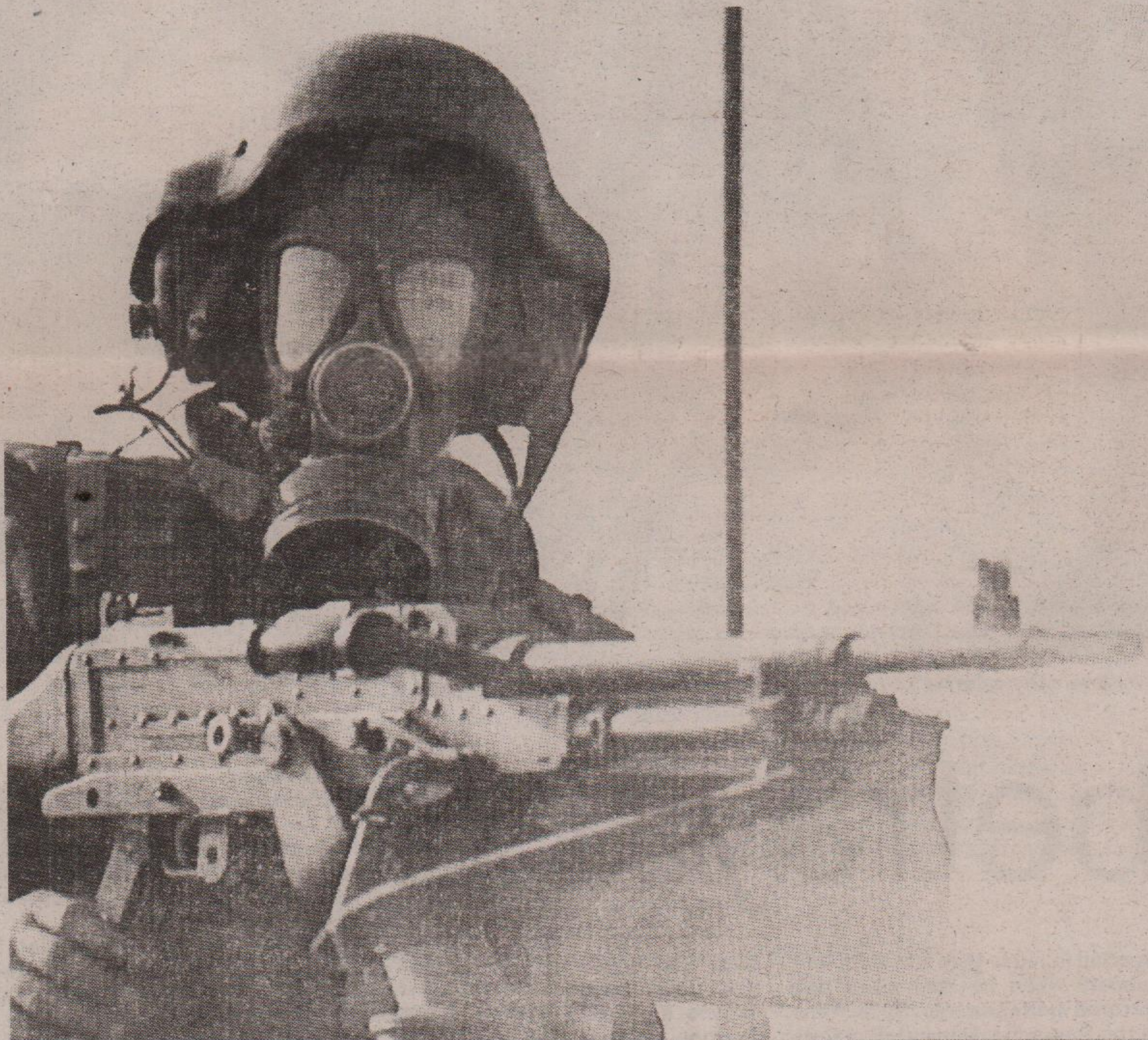
None of the above is intended to give comfort to the middle class pacifists who want to limit the anti-war movement to abstract pleas for "peace" and outlaw serious, political debate with the movement; it is intended to wake people like you up to the need to conduct yourselves responsibly and to have some regard for the mass of working class people who are unhappy about the war but need to be won and convinced by our argument.

Not all their instincts—their dislike of Saddam Hussein and their concern for the lives of "our boys/girls", for instance—are misplaced. The conclusion they may draw from such instincts are often wrong, but be need to relate to such sentiments, not simply denounce them or (almost as bad) reply with empty sloganising.

I can almost hear you growling with rage at such "rightist" arguments, Jeff. As I've explained, it's not really me who is "rightist" here—it's you. Read Lenin on *Left Wing Communism* (yes, I know it's a much misused book, but it is relevant here) or Trotsky on *A Sectarian Caricature* or almost anything by James P Cannon. Or were they all right wing and soft on these matters?

finally, you will note that I have deliberately avoided any mention of the issue that sparked our row; whether there can be any socialist justification for Saddam's missile attacks on Israel and whether the "Zionist state" has any right to defend itself under any circumstances. Frankly, I find your position on this revolting and—yes—objectively anti-Semitic. Or perhaps we'd better stick to open letters.

Yours, Jim Denham



Israeli soldier: workers should not defend Zionist state

Reply to a dishonest opportunist

of the Kuwaitis and Iraqis by the Saddam regime. Again he is being completely dishonest. Perhaps he has never read the LRCI statement that condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the article "Saddam's Iraq" (WP 134 September 1990) which described the history of this bloody dictator and his attacks on socialists and Kurds, and the numerous other articles where we have pointed this out.

What Denham and *Socialist Organiser* really object to, what they really class as "giving support to petit bourgeois nationalism", is our intransigent support for a semi-colony being attacked by imperialism—whatever the nature of its regime. Because although *Socialist Organiser* "defends" Iraq on pa-

per, in practice it wriggles and dissembles to avoid this "unpopular" position and quickly abandons it altogether when it wants to cosy up to the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

Finally it appears we have joined *Socialist Organiser's* growing list of left organisations that are "objectively anti-Semitic". Why? Because we refuse to support the right of Israel to

"defend" itself: a state that has "defended" itself so well that that it occupies parts of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, has obliterated the Palestinian homeland, has massacred tens of thousands of Arabs in its mass bombing of Beirut, shoots Palestinians every day, launched an unprovoked attack on Iraq in 1981, etc, etc.

Yes, comrades, unlike you we know what the right of "defence" for an expansionist Zionist state means. So do the Arab masses. Following your own logic couldn't we say that your consistent concern for the safety of the oppressor in the Middle East and your disdain for the oppressed is "objectively" anti-Arab and racist?

Workers Power

**THE GULF
WAR**

OUT NOW!

**Stop the
war
against
Iraq!**



40p from your Workers Power seller

Oil profits

Dear comrades,

Most people know the war in the Gulf is over oil. We all see that every time oil prices go up so do petrol prices, but when oil prices fall it takes a lot longer for petrol prices and other oil-based consumer products to come down.

But it is not just about supplies of oil, it is about profits of the oil companies. If you look at the relation between oil prices and the profits of the Big Six oil companies, it is clear that the lower oil prices are, the more profits go up. As the oil price began to fall in the early 80s so profits began to rise. This is not hard to explain. The cheaper these companies can buy oil and the dearer they can sell it to us, the more profits they make.

But here lies the rub. Because the demand for oil based products was not strong in the 1980s, the oil companies found it more difficult to make profits. Although the profits in 1986 and 1988 looked good in absolute volume, they were in fact far below the profits of 1980 because the purchasing power of the dollar by 1988 had fallen by nearly two-thirds due to inflation and exchange rate weaknesses. Accordingly the \$20 billion profit in 1988 translates into only a \$7 bil-

lion profit when we make allowances for the weaker dollar. This is just 30% of the profit in 1980 in real terms.

This gives a clearer idea of what is going on in the Gulf. The western oil companies have and are facing a profit crunch. They are desperate for cheap oil. The allied invasion of the Gulf has now driven down oil prices to below their 1974 level. Already, as the *Financial Times* reported recently, this has boosted refining margins in Eu-

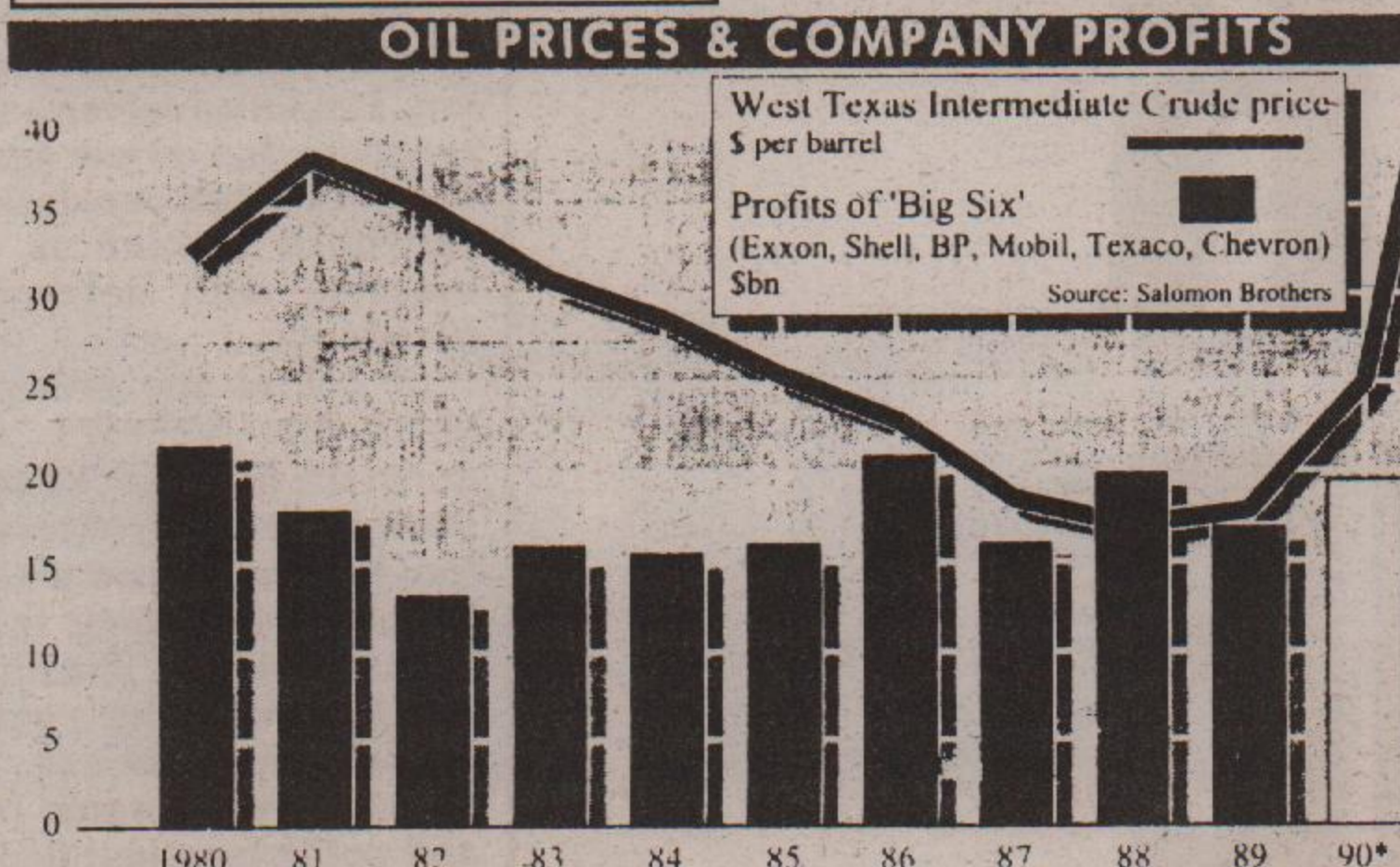
rope from \$3 a barrel to \$9 a barrel which will result in a gigantic jump in the profits of the oil companies.

The imperialists and their oil companies never reconciled themselves to the emergence of OPEC in the early 70s and nationalisation of domestic oil production, which "robbed" them of the profits made from pumping oil in the Arab and African countries. They intend to reduce OPEC to a shell that meets every so often at the Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva. This is what the war is about.

Not only have the imperialists invented Saddam Hussein, they have found a final use for him; a convenient cover for their naked grab for oil and desire to turn the clock back to 1973.

In comradeship,
Brian Green

Write to:
**Workers Power: BCM 7750,
London WC1N 3XX**



JONAS NESIC

Miner, revolutionary, internationalist

JONAS NESIC, a French revolutionary and worker in a chemical plant, died in Elbeuf, near Rouen, on 31 January. He committed suicide.

Jonas's imposing stature and warm heart were well known throughout the French left and beyond. A one-time miner and member of the French Trotskyist organisation, the LCR, Jonas came from the mining regions on the French-German border.

A revolutionary throughout his life, he was victimised by the pit management who could not stomach his political views. In 1984, by this time living in Rouen, Jonas became passionately involved in solidarity work with the British miners' strike, following an initial contact with the comrades of the French section of the LRCI, Pouvoir Ouvrier, and miners we had taken to France on a solidarity visit.



Together with friends and comrades in Rouen, Jonas organised a series of meetings and solidarity actions, including the distribution of a leaflet in Polish to sailors transporting scab coal from Poland to Britain via Rouen.

Jonas made a series of visits to Britain, and was known and loved in the pit villages and pubs of Yorkshire and the Midlands. Following the end of the strike he was an active supporter of the National Rank and File Movement and a campaign in support of victimised and imprisoned miners.

As a mark of the enormous respect and affection which the miners felt for Jonas, the Keresley and Hatfield NUM sent representatives to his funeral, at which other miners and a representative of the LRCI spoke. Widely known for his solidarity work with the oppressed masses of Latin America, in the last period of his life he was active in fighting the imperialist war drive in the Gulf.

Jonas's political trajectory mirrored that of tens of thousands of French worker revolutionaries. Radicalised in the wake of May 1968, during the Mitterrand years he became increasingly embittered by the betrayals of the reformist misleaders of the working class, especially in the trade unions.

Although his faith in his own future finally failed, he never lost confidence in the ability of the international working class to sweep away all that is decadent and rotten in capitalist society, and to replace it by a living, thriving workers' democracy.

Jonas will be mourned in France, Britain, Latin America, wherever his contagious good humour, strength and hatred of oppression were felt and wherever his singing of workers' songs was heard.

We salute his memory and send our deepest condolences to his comrades and family, especially Brigitte and Annie, and his daughter, Carrine, and his parents. "The big man" will not be forgotten.

Poll Tax misery

Dear Comrades,

As a NALGO member and worker in Southwark I write to correct a small inaccuracy which occurred in the February edition of *Workers Power*. "No relief from Poll Tax misery". It was only the teaching unions in Southwark who voted overwhelmingly for strike action against cuts.

All of the other unions in Southwark are at the moment in dispute with management over new disciplinary and sickness procedures. We achieved an overwhelming vote to strike one day on week one, two days on week two and three days on week three, one of the strike days to coincide with the one day's strike action by NUT and NATFHE against cuts.

Unfortunately a combination of a sell-out by NUPE officials and bad advice from branch officials led to this being reduced to two days of strike action, for the moment. However, this action which involved three of the biggest branch meetings held for many years in Southwark, represents a fightback from recent small and demoralised meetings.

The "right" of management to hire and fire at will is something which is being resisted in a number of London local authorities. The fact that similar new proposals are being broached in a number of boroughs shows that management maintain good communication from borough to borough. As trade unionists we should learn the lessons of this inter-borough action by management.

As a councillor in Lambeth I must also take issue with you in describing (in the same article), Lambeth's actions in being allowed to charge a level of Poll Tax above the spending cap as a "victory". I was not elected in order to be able to charge the working class of Lambeth a larger amount of Poll Tax than the Tory limit.

I was elected on a promise not to set a Poll Tax at all, not to collect it and not to pay. A small number of councillors have voted in accordance with this mandate. Unfortunately, due to councillors in the "Labour Coordinating Committee" group voting with the Tories, Lambeth Council has now agreed, by one vote, to use bailiffs against workers who cannot or will not pay Poll Tax.

Yours sincerely,
Councillor Rachael Webb
London Borough of Lambeth

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

BECOME A SUPPORTER!

IF YOU hate the war, if you hate the bosses and their system and you want to do something about it: become a Workers Power supporter.

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation fighting to build a revolutionary working class party.

We are **communists** because we want to see an end to poverty, unemployment, the misery and suffering caused by the profit system and the daily oppression of women, black people, youth, lesbians and gay men. We believe the working class can end all this by taking hold of the wealth and the technology of modern capitalism and using it to meet human need.

The laser and computer technology being used in the Gulf today, together with the £100,000s wasted on each bomb, could be used to

eradicate hunger, disease and homelessness.

We are **internationalists**. We do not regard the workers' of other countries as the "enemy". We believe they are our brothers and sisters. Our real enemy is the international capitalist system, which can be fought if we build international unity between workers of all countries. We are actively trying to do this by building an international organisation, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.

We are **revolutionaries** because we don't think the big businessmen and the generals will simply sit back and let the workers peacefully take over society after a show of hands in Parliament. Struggles in every decade of this century show that the workers will have to smash the bosses' state and build a different

kind of state, based on:

- workers' councils elected from every factory, office, housing estate
- a workers' militia instead of the hired thugs of the police and "professional" army
- workers' control and management of every workplace instead of subservience to the supervisor and slavery to the machine.

To bring about a workers' revolution we need to build a revolutionary working class party rooted in every workplace, estate, school and community. This will not come about automatically: it needs people prepared to commit themselves 100% to the fight for revolutionary politics.

If you want to join that fight, and you agree with the ideas and arguments in this paper, take the first step. Send off this coupon now:

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THE WAR AT HOME

TWENTY ONE million pounds. That's the price of a single Tornado bomber. Just two of these planes, which are busy raining cluster bombs on Iraq, could more than cover the cost of a brand new district hospital.

From the safety of their huge mansions and luxury apartments the pampered barons of finance and industry that run this country are happy to see their government spend £30 million a day to bomb Iraq into the stone age.

Their eyes are not fixed on the charred remains of the civilians being slaughtered by the allies. They are focused on the cheap oil and juicy reconstruction contracts that will come if the USA and Britain win.

Meanwhile food aid to the victims of famine in Africa has been halted. The cost of one week of this obscene slaughter could cover emergency supplies of grain to prevent slow death from starvation and disease for hundreds of thousands of people in Sudan.

Priorities

Saving people's lives is not one of capitalism's priorities. As the Tories scrimped and saved over every penny for extra fuel payments this winter, as over 3000 slept rough on London's icy streets, the bosses had no problem stumping up the enormous sums needed for their mass murder in the Gulf.

Meanwhile, in the words of the City wide-boys, the economy has "fallen off the edge of the cliff". Britain is going into a crisis as least as bad as the recession of the early 1980s.

In December over 80,000 workers were thrown onto the dole, and over 24,000 firms went bust last year. The CBI, the bosses' union, predicts that unemployment will be back up to three million by the end of the year and another



No money for the homeless—millions for bombs

90,000 manufacturing jobs will go by the end of April.

So much for the economic miracle the Tories told us that their rule had created.

Of course in the arms industry, where workers are being asked to maintain round the clock production, the bosses hope to make a killing, in every sense, now that the war has started.

British Aerospace (BAe) made £7.5 billion from weapons production last year and expects big rewards now. But this "success story" is unlikely to warm the hearts of the BAe workers. At plants in Preston and Kingston 5,000 jobs are to be axed.

Money that could be spent on jobs, schools and healthcare for working class people is being used instead to incinerate our Iraqi brothers and sisters. How can this madness happen?

The bosses' economic experts come on television to tell us that the recession is a result of falling demand for goods. Too much is being produced, too little is being sold. But this blows a gaping hole in their claim that the "market" is the fairest and most rational way of organising the economy.

Take Ravenscraig steel plant as an example, where another 1,100 jobs cuts have been announced and where closure is on the cards. Is there no

need for steel? Could the 1,100 workers being thrown onto the dole not be working to help build homes for the homeless and new hospitals for the sick?

What the bosses really mean is that producing steel for such things is not profitable for them. In this society, it is private profit for a small handful of millionaires, not the basic needs of millions, that determines what gets done and for whose benefit.

Recession

As the recession begins to bite in Britain the bosses are out to make workers pay. We are the ones who face the misery of living on a pittance from the dole offices when they close our factories. We are the ones being told that we must take cuts in our pay in order to "cure" inflation and "save" jobs. We are the ones in the escalating queues for basic services like housing and health.

If we try to resist the savage effects of the recession on our lives the bosses will play the national unity card. We should not go on strike because there's a war on, because we would be betraying "our boys" at the front. We will be called, as the miners were in 1984, "the enemy within". We will face the anti-union laws, the reactionary judges and the

police thugs.

But if we give in to these threats or buy these lies about "unity" we will pay a terrible price—hardship, unemployment, wrecked families, and, in the factories, an ever more vicious management regime. This is why the whole working class needs to shout, loud and clear, the simple message—we won't pay for your crisis.

When the bosses say that the money isn't there to grant pay rises above inflation, to keep workers on the payroll or to repair schools or the transport system, they are lying. The billions they have spent to protect the big oil companies and their domination of the Middle East are proof enough of that.

The profit system breeds crisis and war, and workers are the victims of both. That's why we need to step up working class opposition to the war, and the struggle at home against the effects of the recession on our living standards. It is why we must aim to turn the bosses' war against Iraq into a class war against the profit system itself. ■

As we go to press it looks likely that the Birmingham Six will be released this month. We wholeheartedly welcome this. Their release is yet another indictment of British "justice".

Ireland: Britain's other war

BRITAIN'S OTHER war stole the headlines from the Gulf for a spell in February. On 8 February an IRA Active Service Unit (ASU) fired mortar bombs at Downing Street while the war cabinet was meeting. On 18 February London was in chaos after bombs exploded at Paddington and Victoria railway stations.

One civilian was killed at Victoria after police ignored an IRA warning call. The war cabinet escaped without injury. Britain was given a sharp reminder that its war against the nationalist population in Northern Ireland is still meeting with determined resistance.

Of course the press and politicians rushed to condemn the IRA attacks as the work of "cowardly terrorists". Neil Kinnock joined with the Tories in describing the attack as "vicious and futile". What a sickening contrast these condemnations were to the way the same press and politicians justified the bombing and murder of thousands of Iraqi civilians in the Gulf War. The "smart bombs" that burned hundreds of Iraqis to death are, they tell us, legitimate. The actions of the IRA are a "crime".

This hypocrisy is essential to the rulers of Britain. It is part of their propaganda to convince workers here that there is no war going on in Ireland and that the IRA are a gang of criminals. On both counts they are lying. For well over twenty years British troops have been on the streets of Northern Ireland, in conjunction with the RUC police, waging a war against those opposed to Britain's military occupation and political rule over the Six Counties.

It is a war in which the British state uses helicopters, armoured cars, SAS assassination squads, and hundreds of armed patrols on a daily basis. It is a war in which legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the forthcoming Emergency Provisions Bill, authorises detention without trial, non-jury courts, sophisticated torture techniques and the suppression of the most elementary democratic rights of the nationalist population. It is a war in which unnamed Irish civilians, like Fergal Caragher last December, can be murdered by troops and the RUC under a shoot to kill policy that leaves the murderers

unpunished.

Are such measures the normal way of dealing with criminals? Of course not. They are normal measures in imperialism's wars against national liberation fighters. Over the last forty years in Malaysia, Kenya, Cyprus and Aden, the British state has waged such wars. Its enemies have always been labelled "terrorists". Its actions have always been justified by the claim that British troops are simply "keeping the peace". The same pattern is being followed in Ireland today.

Nor is it the case that the IRA are a small, desperate and isolated terrorist group. The IRA has the support of thousands of nationalists in the North. This is why the British state has had to gag Sinn Fein, the political wing of the republican movement. Its political and electoral successes were a constant reminder to the British people that the IRA had mass support.

So long as the British state chooses to deny the basic democratic right of self-determination to the whole Irish people this war will continue. There will be more bombings and more deaths. Britain divided Ireland, against the will of its people, in 1921. They kept the industrial north and constructed an artificial state. The sectarian Northern statelet is dominated by Protestants who remain loyal to Britain because of the economic privileges in work, housing and welfare they enjoy over the Catholic minority. Britain's war against the nationalists is aimed not at keeping the peace, but keeping a piece of Ireland for itself.

This is why, whatever our criticisms of the IRA's strategy we unconditionally support them in their struggle against British imperialism. They are fighting a war, and it is a just one. If civilians get caught in the crossfire it is the fault of those who keep the war going by keeping British troops in Ireland. The British establishment did not blink an eyelid when an RAF bomb killed 130 Iraqi civilians who had the misfortune to live near a "strategic bridge" and their outrage over the Victoria bomb stinks with hypocrisy.

Get the troops out of Ireland now, and allow the whole Irish people to determine their own future free of British interference! ■

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