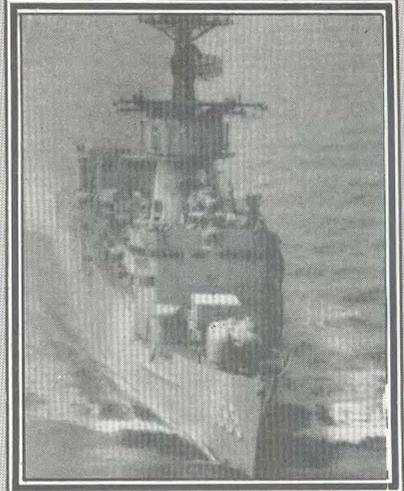


CLASS STRUGGLE

VOL.14 NO.8 OCTOBER 1990

30P



THE GULF —
WHERE WE
STAND

Inside

Kampuchea
close to peace

**Snapshots
of Central
Europe**

**Here to
stay —
stop deporting
black people**

UP AGAINST THE STATE

CLASS STRUGGLE

The principal contradiction in the present crisis in the Gulf is between the Arab masses on the one hand, and imperialism headed by the United States on the other.

The Iraqi attack on Kuwait should be condemned. The majority of third world countries have frontiers which were manipulated by colonialism, and it only plays into the hands of imperialism if they try to resolve issues by force.

In the Middle East, imperialism prefers to intervene by proxy where possible. It relies first and foremost on Israel, and secondly on the conservative Arab regimes. However, these are not sufficient to contain the mass struggles, and an important service is also played by the 'nationalist' regimes like Iraq.

IRAQ'S REGIONAL ROLE

The Iraqi leadership has consistently suppressed the democratic aspirations of its people, wiped out the strongest communist movement in the Middle East, massacred the Kurdish people and assassinated many Palestinian leaders. These actions have been of priceless value to imperialism. With its one-sided economic development, Iraq was a profitable outlet for surplus industrial capacity, surplus foodstuffs and especially military hardware from the industrialised world. However, the problem about such regimes, from imperialism's point of view, is that they can sometimes get too big for their boots and get carried away by their militaristic regional ambitions.

Up to the end of the 1970's, the key to US implantation in the Gulf area was Iran. The revolutionary struggle of the Iranian masses changed all this, and made a direct appeal to the oppressed masses of the Middle East who were disgusted at their governments' capitulation to imperialism and betrayal of the Palestinian cause. This posed a grave threat to imperialism. In these circumstances, Iraq attacked Iran in 1975. Although not entirely happy about Saddam Hussein's

regional ambitions, imperialism, with France playing the major role, stepped in with massive military aid to prevent his defeat. Even Iraq's large-scale use of poison gas and massacre of civilians met with only token condemnation because it suited imperialism at that time.

Encouraged by the way the international community turned

increasingly being orientated in a southerly direction, i.e. towards the Middle East.

SUPERPOWER STRUGGLE

For most of the post-war period, US activity in the area was conducted under the signboard of opposing the Soviet Union. In fact, this served as a smokescreen to hide US ambitions, and the main contradiction was always between imperialism and the



a blind eye to these atrocities, Saddam Hussein conceived wider regional ambitions, based on the huge military machine he now possessed.

The USA had long prepared for a military invasion of the Gulf area. Detailed planning goes back at least to President Carter's scheme for a rapid deployment force in the late 1970's. During the 1980's, NATO strategy was

masses, with the Palestinian struggle as the central manifestation of this contradiction. However, there was also a genuine, though secondary, struggle between the two superpowers. Soviet infiltration of the revolutionary movements, support for authoritarian regimes and undermining of the line of self-reliance did great damage to the cause and objectively aided imperialism. At the same time, its own

strategic ambitions in the area provided a certain constraint on what the USA could do, if direct military confrontation were to be avoided.

Thus an indispensable external factor for the present US intervention has been the new climate of relations with the Soviet Union. Trying to curry favour with the West in order to win acceptance into the embrace of international capitalism under favourable terms, Gorbachev's main bargaining counter is to offer to throw the Soviet Union's considerable international clout behind US policy. Bush has gratefully accepted this.

Although the above is an essential condition it does not explain the main politics of the US intervention. In fact, this has to be understood in terms of the central contradiction between imperialism and the masses.

1. In the specific conditions of the Middle East, the Palestinian issue has always been the main focal point of this contradiction. It is the touchstone of anti-imperialism, and at different historical junctures has served to point the accusing finger at the capitulationist and anti-popular regimes. Most recently, the Intifada of the Palestinian people has marked a new stage. It exposes the hypocrisy of so-called nationalist political movements and the misleading philosophies once propagated by the Soviet Union. Thus the situation throughout the area is far from stable from the point of view of imperialism.

2. A secondary reason is the need to administer a slap on the wrist to dependent regimes like that of Iraq. It is fine if they stick to massacring their own minorities and the revolutionaries. But they need to be taught a lesson if they dare to challenge imperialism's definition of the regional status quo.

3. A third important reason is that Saddam Hussein faced at home a potentially destabilising mass movement. In choosing to confront the West in the interests of his own regional ambitions, he has been forced to conjure with a number of genuine

revolutionary ideas which strike a chord with the oppressed masses. The most important of these is the Palestinian issue. Another important one is the challenge to the conservative Arab regimes, particularly over the petroleum issue. Kuwait symbolises quite well the way in which the fruits of the oil price rise, which was won as a result of the bitter struggles of the masses in the Arab world and other parts of the third world in the 1970's, have simply been used mainly to stimulate economic expansion in the already industrialised countries.

4. A fourth element, which also in a way sums up the others, is a theme often alluded to in the bourgeois press. This is the fact that the cold war is ended and a new order of international relations needs to be built. From the point of view of imperialism, this should be one where regional conflicts are kept within bounds where they don't threaten the stability of the exploitative system itself. Joint military interventions by the powers will serve this end, using the USA mainly as a kind of collective gendarme. Within the Security Council of the United Nations, none of the big powers now questions this vision of the world, which is the reason why imperialist policy can so easily be depicted as the voice of the international community in this instance.

Our position is one of consistent support for anti-imperialism, democracy, human rights and the basic interests of the masses. If the USA

(whether in its own name or under the banner of the United Nations) attacks Iraq, the main aspect of this will be a conflict between imperialism and the oppressed masses. We will support whatever forces, including Iraq, are fighting the USA. It is perfectly consistent with this to support at the same time, all other struggles of the oppressed masses in the region, including the democratic struggle of the Iraqi people, the national struggle of the Kurds and the independence movement in Kuwait, against the Iraqi regime. ■

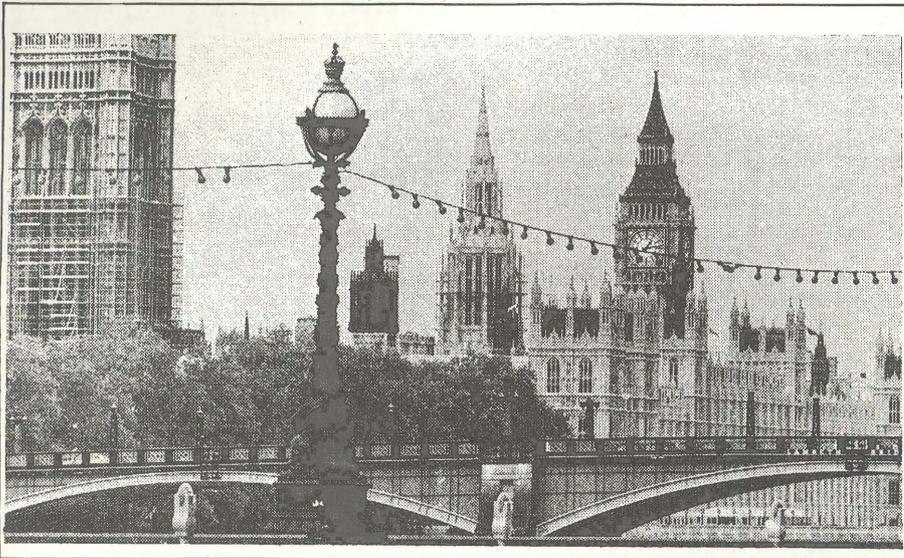
POLITICAL PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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Jobs Galore in the City



Nigel Lawson, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, has got himself another job. He is to spend two days a week as Chairman of the Central Europe Trust, advising the new governments in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, how to privatise their former state-controlled companies. It will be his third job since leaving the Cabinet.

Lawson already earns £100,000 working two days a week as a non-executive director of Barclays Bank. He also manages to squeeze in two days a month advising GPA, the Dublin-based aircraft-leasing company, for £40,000. And, on top of all this, he retains his seat (and salary) as a backbench MP.

JUST TYPICAL

Nigel Lawson is typical of many former members of the government who have found themselves some lucrative jobs in the City.

For example, after the last major Cabinet re-shuffle, George Younger, former Defence Secretary, took up an executive directorship with the Royal Bank of Scotland. John Nott, another former Defence Secretary, on leaving government, became first director, then chairman, of the merchant bankers, Lazard Brothers, on a salary of £816,000. His predecessor, Lord Carrington, who had resigned as Foreign Secretary in 1982, soon became a director of GEC. Now he is the chairman of Christies & Christie Manson and Woods International.

DOWN THE RIVER THEY GO

The list of ex-ministers who have joined the stampede from

Westminster down the river to the City of London is endless. Peter Walker left the Cabinet where he was in charge of the Welsh Office in order to "spend more time with my family". He is now a non-executive director of Smith New Court and Tate & Lyle, and a director of DC Gardner.

Sir Norman Fowles resigned as Employment Secretary and is now on the board of the National Freight Corporation, privatised back in 1982 and also a director of Evered.

HOW MUCH DO THEY DO?

What exactly do these MP's and ex-MP's have to do for these salaries which many people consider quite excessive. According to Stephen Bampfylde, of the recruitment agency, Saxton Bampfylde International: "The average work schedule for each non-executive directorship would involve a board meeting a month with perhaps half a day's preparation, and membership of a committee.

Bampfylde reckons the pay norm for this year is around £15,000, although this could be in the form of the use of a Jaguar and a chauffeur or an office with a secretary. "A chap might have five such directorships, each offering something different so he could put together a package."

In addition to having what might be described by some as nice little jobs on the side, the backbenchers in this fortunate situation continue to perform as MP's, drawing their salary of £26,701.

MP'S ARE AT IT AS WELL

The link between the financial institutions in the City and

Westminster is of course not restricted to ex-government ministers. The number of companies that have direct connections with MP's is quite astounding. Details of this came to light earlier in the year when 'The Guardian' published a list of the directorships, consultancies and sponsorships MP's have, along with details of share and property holdings.

From the list it was possible to see that the MP for Westminster North, John Wheeler, was a director of nine companies as well as chairman of four others.

Sir Julian Ridsdale, MP for Harwick, described himself as "Adviser, Bank of Credit and Commerce, Shimuzu Construction Company, Sir Robert McAlpine and Son, Nissan (UK), Ogilvy and Mather."

Patrick McNair Wilson, MP for New Forest, stated that he was: "Consultant to Union Carbide UK Ltd., Re-Chem International Ltd., Rhone Poulenc PLC., Airoil-Flaregas Ltd. and chairman of Voucher Vault PLC."

NOT THE RICHEST

With these levels of income, one might think that MP's would figure highly among the richest people in the land. But far from it. The 'Sunday Times' recently carried out a survey to discover who were the wealthiest 400 people in Britain. Only three MP's were included: Michael Heseltine who is said to be worth £60 million; Bill Benyon, MP for Milton Keynes, £25 million and Alan Clark, Plymouth South, £20 million.

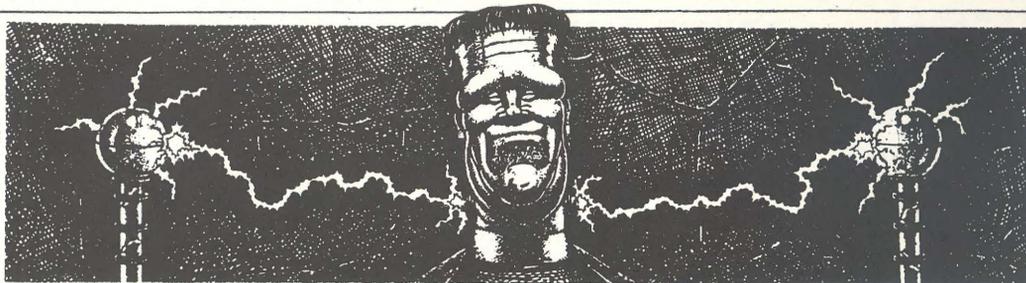
In a list published in 'The Guardian', Benyon merely noted that he "owns farmland and unfurnished rented property". But then as the 'Sunday Times' report pointed out, one third of the wealth of this country is still held by large land-owners, although not necessarily all in the form of land.

IT DOES WORK, FOR SOME

So then, what will Nigel Lawson be saying to the people of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary: "The market economy works"?

Well, it does. For some, exceedingly well.

But the people of Eastern Europe have already had a lot of experience of leaders and politicians who have grown rich at the expense of others' hard work and suffering. Just like here. ■



"This electricity privatisation is a real pain in the neck"

We may have seen the Gas Board's 'Sid'. But there is more than meets the eye when it comes to electricity's 'Frank'.

Behind the scenes is yet another big rip-off of the tax-payers.

No-one seriously believes that these privatised services really belonged to the people. However, taxes all come from wealth created by working people. We should have the right to decide what those taxes are used for. That wealth was stolen from us by the bosses and their state.

Over the years, through our taxes we have paid for the electricity industry. We have

no say in what is to happen to it whether under a Tory or Labour government.

Now it is to be sold off cheaply to make a profit for the few. We will end up with higher electricity bills. All the propaganda about a shareholding democracy is rubbish. Most people will not buy shares - they cannot afford to. Even if you do buy a few shares, you will not have any say in the new company. It is a minority of big investors who run the show and stand to get rich.

Basically, the government is lying (again!). It is so worried that it has banned reports on the true investment potential of the electricity

industry.

Some people estimate that the true worth of the industry is as much as £30 billion. The sale is hoped to raise £5 billion. But some financial experts estimate that less than £4 billion is more likely.

It looks likely that over £20 billion of wealth (taxes) created by workers will be given as a free gift to the new controllers of the electricity industry.

£20 billion is a lot of money that could be spent on the needs of ordinary people. On top of that, a further £18 millions of wealth we created is to be used to advertise the sell-off.

TUC - Missing the point again

The TUC has shrunk from 12.2 million members in 1979 to 8.4 million in 1990. This decade has seen the defeat of traditional areas of militancy such as the miners and widespread mergers amongst the unions.

At the same time, British imperialism has undergone major internal restructuring under Tory leadership. Old large-scale labour-intensive sectors have declined or disappeared. High-tech, smaller-scale enterprises are a major force in the economy. Part-time workers and homeworkers now make up a significant part of the workforce.

The TUC has no real answers on how to lead working people forward. It does not even get the question right.

Despite the structural changes, British imperialism retains its essential exploitative and anti-people nature within Britain. It remains a base for the oppression and exploitation of the world's people. Private profit remains its motive force. It can be no other. That is what it exists for.

ELECTING LABOUR

All the TUC can come up with is the old tired and irrelevant answer of getting

the Labour Party re-elected again to run the system a little fairer than the Tories.

You cannot run a system based on class exploitation fairly. To pretend you can only helps hide the true nature of the system and helps the bosses.

The TUC's vision of socialism is little more than a list of Labour governments' broken promises. It hides the true nature of the state. It has a class nature and, under imperialism, can only serve the ruling class.

As more and more the Labour Party ditches any pretence of being socialist and increasingly the population see it for what it is - yet another party trying to run the system rather than changing it - what does the TUC do? Whether "left" or "right", the trade union leadership still peddles the view that the Labour Party is the only hope for working people.

TRADITION OF STRUGGLE

The working class has a long tradition of class struggle, but has often been dominated by inter-union rivalry, narrow economic interests and lacking in an internationalist outlook. The labour movement has always marginalised women's and national minority

people's issues. Previous Labour governments have reinforced the unions' weaknesses by integrating them into the state, so that they have become part of the system. A union can have £9 million debts but still have £30 million assets (buildings, etc.) and investments.

These weaknesses are summed up in the current TUC. They reflect the imperialist nature of Britain in which the super-profits from exploitation and oppression have funded the hiding of the true nature of the system.

Clearly there is no easy short-term solution to finding ways of building the trade unions as truly independent organisations of the working class as a whole.

We have to start with the unions as they exist now. They have to be changed to be under the democratic control of their members.

The struggle to break with the Labour Party still remains a major issue. We also have to face up to the changing nature of the workforce.

The traditional militancy has to be built upon but expanded to take on new forms of struggle that are not limited by the TUC or the bosses' laws.

PRAKESH



AND PREM MUST STAY

Prakesh married a British citizen in Mauritius who brought her and her son Prem to England in February 1989. They lived in London.

She and her son were given a twelve month leave to remain. During this period she was subjected to physical and sexual abuse by her husband and her little son was physically assaulted.

For her own and her son's safety she sought refuge at her brother's house in Birmingham. Despite all the traumas she has found employment and is working as a Home Care Worker with Birmingham Social Services Department. She has now rented a house where she is living with her son.

She applied to the Home Office for Permanent Stay on compassionate grounds: wanting to continue her work looking after the needy and elderly people with Birmingham Social Services Department; and continue to provide security and stability for Prem and herself.

The Home Office turned her application down without even interviewing her, let alone looking at her case in any detail.

DEPORTATION

She and Prem face deportation to Mauritius. If they are sent back she will have no job, no house and will face hardship, social isolation and humiliation.

INTRODUCTION

On 10th September, three campaigns against the racist immigration laws held a successful public meeting in Tamworth, West Midlands. Three black women, all threatened with deportation, are campaigning for their right to stay in Britain. All three - Sonia Malhi, Dharmowtee and Prakesh were present at the meeting, together with families, friends and supporters of the campaigns.

About 70 people attended the meeting and details of the campaigns were broadcast on local radio and TV, as well as front-page reporting in local papers.

The women's stories illustrate how the immigration laws and rules threaten black people's lives, separating families, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

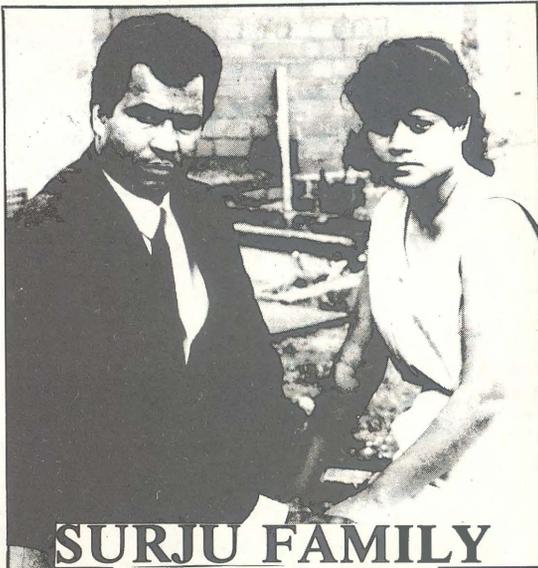
SONIA MALHI



In Sonia's case, her right to live independently and free from violence is denied by the Home Office. (For details of Sonia's case, see May issue of 'Class Struggle'.)



For more information, contact the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH.



SURJU FAMILY CAMPAIGN

Dharmowtee Surju, 26 years old, got married in Mauritius on 2nd April 1990, and accompanied her husband to England on the 12th April. Her husband, 40 year old Harry Surju, is a British citizen, who works as a Charge Nurse for North Birmingham Health Authority and has lived in England for over 18 years.

The couple were interviewed at the British High Commission in Mauritius on the 10th April 1990. No decision was given afterwards regarding Entry Clearance for Dharmowtee to live with her husband in the UK. They were both asked to go away and await the outcome of her application- for an unknown length of time. That is, no further appointment was given.

Harry's leave from employment was over. He had to fly back to England to save his job immediately. Seeing that his wife's passport had been stamped "Entry Clearance to UK Applied For", and having been advised that Mauritians did not require a visa to enter the UK, Harry asked Dharmowtee to travel to England with him.

PRESENT SITUATION

At Heathrow, Dharmowtee was refused leave to enter the country- but was allowed in on temporary admission. Clare Short M.P. made a representation on compassionate grounds to the Home Office Minister. He has refused to overturn the Immigration Officer's decision and has turned down Dharmowtee's original application to join her husband in this country. The Immigration Office has four times fixed dates for Dharmowtee's removal to Mauritius.

Dharmowtee is pregnant and is also in poor health, for which she is receiving medical treatment. But now the Immigration Office are sending Department of Health doctors to examine her to see if she is too ill to travel.

Dharmowtee could be picked up any day and deported. We need your support urgently.

STOP DEPORTING BLACK PEOPLE!

Mandy's Diary

Sept. 2nd: The final of the television programme 'One Man and his Dog' was won this year by a woman. However, all attempts to change the name of the series to 'One Woman and her Dog' have been firmly squashed.

Sept. 15th: Men who think pornography degrades men as well as women, and contributes to sexual inequality and crime, are meeting in London today for the first all-male anti-pornography conference. The organisers hope that the 110 participants will agree on measures to curb pornography, including picketing firms that produce it, asking newsagents not to stock it and joining women's anti-pornography campaigns.

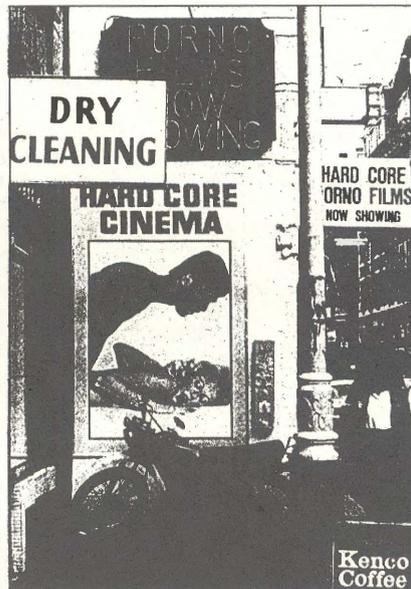
The conference chairman, Peter Baker, said: "I think a lot of men are unhappy about pornography but haven't worked out why. A lot of people use it, feel it's not doing them any good, but are as addicted to it as they might be to smoking."

Mr Baker is on the steering committee of the Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship, which "aims to stop pornography based on women's subordination and foster less discriminatory heterosexual and homosexual erotica."

I can imagine quite a debate building up as to where erotica ends and pornography begins! My own view is that any pictures of bits of women's bodies are insulting to women, and a man must be pretty lacking in imagination if he needs them. Nevertheless, any action against pornography is welcome.

Two million pornographic magazines are sold each month, and sales are worth £500 million a year.

Sept. 16th: Out of the 400 richest people in the country, only 23 are women. Out of the top 50, only one is a woman (the Queen). The richest 400 people between them own 4.4 million acres of land, equivalent to 6 medium-sized counties. More than one quarter are aristocrats, and most support the Conservative Party. They are worth a combined £54.3 billion.



A book entitled 'The Beauty Myth' by Naomi Wolf is causing quite a stir. It has been the subject of some excited letters in various newspapers (written of course by men) frantically denying the claims and refuting the arguments put forward in the book. It seems to me that this in itself goes to show how seriously men are worried by it.

I haven't read it myself but was reading some extracts in the 'Sunday Times', which make you think how powerful is the need to be regarded as beautiful and to what lengths women will go. It really messes up some women's lives. Every year, for example, according to the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association, 150,000 American women die of anorexia.

But any idea of beauty is subjective and fluctuates with the fashions of the times. Vast sums of money are spent and much suffering endured by women trying to conform to an unreasonable ideal of how they should be. They are deliberately made to feel dissatisfied and unhappy with their natural selves.

Naomi Wolf states: "The American cosmetic surgery industry grosses £300 million dollars every year and is growing annually by 10%. But a mechanism of intimidation must be set in place to maintain this growth.... The surgeon's market is imaginary, since there is nothing wrong with women's faces or bodies that social change won't cure,

so they depend for their income on warping female self-perception and multiplying female self-hatred."

Contrast this totally unnecessary cutting up of women's bodies for enormous profits with the fact that more than one million people in Britain are waiting to go into hospital for necessary operations, and one quarter of them have been waiting for more than a year.

Sept. 26th: I have been watching with interest the case of Alison Halford, Assistant Chief Constable on Merseyside. She blames her failure to get promotion on sex discrimination, and is taking her case to an industrial tribunal. As Britain's highest ranking woman police officer, she must be in a better position than anybody to challenge the sexism of the police force, and I wish her luck with it. Only ten forces in the country have women chief superintendants, the next rank down.

One example of sexism is that women are being regularly passed over when they apply for public order duties. The Police Federation apparently thinks they could be a liability in violent situations. It doesn't seem to have got as far as realising that a less aggressive approach by the police in the first place could prevent the violent situations!

Meanwhile, in another great bastion of male privilege and arrogance, the Houses of Parliament, the tiny minority of women there are warned to tone down their demands for reform in case they should offend their male colleagues.

The warning came from the Home Office Minister with responsibility for Women's Issues, Angela Rumbold.

"We can't achieve things overnight that are going to be pretty revolutionary," she said. "The trick is to do it without antagonising people." She admitted that very little had changed in favour of women. And if the Minister for Women has that sort of attitude, it looks as if that is how it will stay....

MILLIONS SAY NO POLL TAX

Estimates of the number of people who have not yet paid any poll tax or who are well in arrears vary enormously. One thing, however, is certain: the first figure must be in millions. So is the second.

Among those in the non-payment group are many who are doing so out of conviction. They have chosen not to pay because they see this tax as morally wrong, unjust and unfair: a tax that hits hardest those least able to pay.

For large numbers of people, the poll tax represents the last straw: they have put up with growing difficulties for long enough. They have seen millions made in the City out of privatisation schemes, to give one example, and at the same time they have been told by the government that for the social services, education and health, strict financial limits are to be imposed.

Refusing to pay the poll tax is for many their own personal way of showing their objections to what is going on in Britain today.

Equally important and increasingly visible are those for whom non-payment is not really a choice. They just cannot afford to pay and survive.

Millions have paid something. But not a lot. "I'll pay. But they will have to wait for it" and "I'll pay when I am finally forced to" are two fairly common views. This is the level of protest that many have moved forward to. It may not seem much to some who are in the forefront of the anti-poll tax campaign. But it is not insignificant. And even among those who have paid in full, there is disagreement and without doubt, there is a tremendous groundswell of opposition to this flat rate tax, despite what the papers may lead us to believe.

It would be wrong, in assessing the mood of the people, to ignore the fact that there is quite a lot of support for the poll tax. The old rating system left a lot to be desired and there are some cases of working class people being a lot better off under the new scheme. But as many will admit, things may not be the same next year.

SUMMONSES

The first payments were due in April. By now, most local councils (whether Tory or Labour) have sent out reminders, final reminders and are now in the process of taking non-payers to court. For many people, whether to go to court or not is the moment of truth. How far are they prepared to go? But those who just cannot afford it, have little or no choice.

Going to court and attempting to block up the legal system is one tactic currently



Crunch time...Poll Tax refuseniks will soon face the full force of the state

favoured by the anti-poll tax campaign with some success. But in a way it could be seen as merely putting off the evil day when the authorities decide either to use bailiffs to recover the money or to slap a liability order on the non-payer and have it taken from his or her weekly wages.

While it is true that "They can't put us all in prison" (they are full already), the authorities will inevitably seek to enforce their will by the full use of the state, both in the legal field and by the use of police.

But this is not to say that they are bound to win. The size and the effectiveness of the opposition is the key

factor here. In Scotland, for example, where the whole issue is a year in front of England, a very large proportion of the population have still paid either nothing or very little.

Up to now, the anti-poll tax campaign has been able to unite a broad number of people on the basis of the call to delay paying the tax, to block up the courts and the whole system. There has clearly been widespread support for this action. The next months will tell whether there is the strength for the mass campaign to take the further step of urging people to refuse openly to obey the law as the cases come to court and further threats of legal action are used. ■

Don't pay.....Don't panic

They can't force you to pay your poll tax without taking you to court.

If they take you to court, go - it slows down the system.

All the court can do is make a 'liability order'... After this, they can ask you for certain information.

They can get your money off you by

1. Sending bailiffs for your things. The bailiffs cannot force entry and they can only take things belonging to the person named in the 'liability' order.
2. Getting your boss to stop money from your wages...
3. Stopping a weekly amount from your Income Support...

In the very last resort, they can ask the court to put you in prison. BUT they must prove it was your fault you did not pay AND if thousands of people don't pay, the Council wouldn't dare send them all to prison. ANY WAY you can stop the process at any time by paying up.

WARNING: Seek advice if you are in doubt from your local advice centre, CAB or anti-poll tax campaign.

If they send the bailiffs...

1. Bailiffs are usually private debt collectors and do not have the same powers as the police. The court must provide a warrant for the bailiffs but this does not give them the right of entry against your will.
2. Contact the local anti-poll tax union if you know the bailiffs are coming. The more people who come out to protest, the quicker they will go away.
3. If they come, the bailiffs should show identification and give you a copy of Regulation 39 and Schedule 5 of the Enforcement Regulations 1989.
4. If you do not let them in, they have no right to get in. They can, however, climb in if you leave a window open. If they force their way in, call the police to get them removed.
5. The bailiffs can only come in daylight hours.
6. If you do let them in, they can only "lay claim" to goods that are yours. They cannot take fixtures or fittings, or goods that do not belong to you i.e. things on HP or things you have just sold to a trusted friend for a nominal sum!

There are only 1,000 bailiffs for all the councils in England and Wales. They don't stand a chance against 14 million of us - the poll tax non-payers - as long as you know they can't get in unless you let them. The anti-poll tax groups will back you up!

News from the South West

In many areas, court proceedings have started, with courts summoning large numbers of people each day in the hope that most will pay, or not come to the hearing.

In some of these places, local anti-poll tax groups have been active and successful in supporting the people and interfering with court hearings. In Bristol, for example, where the anti-poll tax union has been active for two years, people are organised at street level, both to keep up solidarity, attend and argue with the court, and be ready for bailiffs if necessary.

Solidarity is perhaps the most important aspect, for if enough people hold out against paying, then action against them is a momentous task. Whereas, if that number dwindles, people can be more easily victimised. Experienced and confident anti-poll tax workers can attend court with people and disrupt proceedings by questions and procedures which are legally permitted. Thus a court may only be able to hear six cases in a day, instead of sixty.

Anti-poll tax organisations face many problems however. In Somerset, the courts have started with people living in little villages and it is very difficult for the protestors to find out who has been summonsed, to offer them help and support. Also people are very frightened of going to court, even if they know they are in the rights.

A young man in the South West, who did attend and speak up in his own defence, pointed this out. He told the court how he was an honest, hard-working chap who never thought he would find himself summonsed to court, and how disgraceful it was that this is what the system had done to him. He could not afford to pay the tax, except by selling his motorbike. Then, he could not get to work.

Certainly the campaign is bringing many people into open conflict with the law and the state for the first time in their lives.

Non-payers should be encouraged by news from Scotland. Lothian regional council, for example, has still not recovered £40 million from last year. This year, three quarters of the tax has not been paid.

JOURNEY IN CENTRAL

I have recently had occasion to travel throughout Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. The following are my impressions, inevitably fleeting, but perhaps from a different standpoint than the typical journalist. For a life-long socialist it is bound to be a disappointing experience. It revealed facts about these societies which we have long known about in theory. But to see what this "revisionism" means in practice is still saddening. There can be little doubt that the term "socialism", usurped by these regimes, is now a dirty word among the very people to whom it should have appealed....

REPRESSIVE SYSTEMS

In spite of real achievements in the fields of education, healthcare, culture, housing, sport and provision for the old and disabled, the shadow of the security system gradually stifled everything. The style of the party leadership was repressive... Anyone putting forward a different viewpoint about how matters might be arranged stood a good chance of being persecuted: his or her career would be blocked or they would be moved to a totally different occupation for which they were not trained. In many cases, if the critic was persistent he would be jailed. This created a society of yes-men. People of lower calibre, or mere careerists, inevitably rose up to occupy important positions, whereas honest people with strong convictions were weeded out, persecuted or imprisoned. In all of central Europe the secret police and a tamed press made sure the system continued.

The ridiculous result of this is that what might well have been a "contradiction among the people" developed over the years into an antagonistic contradiction.

There is no evidence that the people of central Europe have a passionate attachment to capitalism as such. But they had no knowledge of, or experience of, the sharp edge of capitalism. (They are now beginning to experience it!) They know very little about the ruthless exploitation by the multinationals in the countries of Latin America, Southeast Asia or other parts of the Third World, or the fascist dictatorship in Turkey. What they see on their TVs and in West Germany is all the glitter of the consumer society. It seems to

work. Without free criticism of the way socialism is run, the resentments eventually build up a head of steam that leads people to reject the system itself. Hans Modrow, the Chairman of the 'Party of Democratic Socialism' (PDS), (successor to the Socialist Unity Party) said on TV: "We have not had socialism." But because the former regime described itself as socialist, it is understandable why people reject the concept of socialism.

It is going to take a long time for the word socialism to gain credibility again. But a young member of the PDS told me this would eventually occur, because capitalism was incapable of solving its contradictions and satisfying people's desire for a better life.

NEW LEADERS

Meanwhile, it is the "intellectuals" who are seizing the leadership, among them some nasty types. In Czechoslovakia, the Minister of Finance is an ardent monetarist - he boasts that he is a follower of Milton Friedman. He is on record as saying that he ~~wants~~ "capitalism with no adjectives". He is only restrained to some extent by the cautious hand of Vaclav Havel, the President.

In Hungary, the former "communist" leaders, having overthrown Kadar who, in certain fields (such as agriculture) had some solid achievements to his credit, proceeded on a reckless course of subservience to foreign capitalism so extreme that even the then-opposition Democratic Forum had to protest! Now that the latter have been elected to power, they are exposing the reckless way these so-called "Marxists" were selling out the assets of the people. For example, the man the "communists" appointed to be in charge of privatisation, sold off the Ibusz Travel Agency by launching a flotation on the Vienna stock exchange. Hungarian nationals, let alone Hungarian workers, were not permitted to buy shares. The price of the shares was set so low that it **trebled** in one day! The owners are now foreign speculators. Not that Democratic Forum is against privatisation. But they do seem to have concern for Hungarian national interests, which could not be said of their "Marxist" predecessors.

In other areas, good old Thatcherite principles are coming into play. In Budapest, the number of buses has been about halved, leading to long waits and gross overcrowding. Fares have **quadrupled**, yet petrol for cars remains relatively cheap. Therefore, everyone who has a car uses it to get to work, leading to traffic jams and pollution worse than London's.

Like all capitalist governments, they are out to make the working people pay for the enormous debts the previous regime incurred. In spite of the country's dire financial situation, the previous regime embarked on an enormously expensive scheme, backed by the World Bank, to dam the Danube. It would have had appalling ecological consequences. Even Russian experts criticised it on the grounds that no scientific study had compared the possible benefits from a programme of energy conservation with the Danube scheme. It was widely believed that the new governments in Czechoslovakia and Hungary had stopped the scheme. But people in Hungary are sceptical: a recent TV programme showed that forests in the area are still being chopped down in preparation.

EAST GERMANY

While socialist ideas seem largely discredited in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the situation in East Germany is somewhat different. My best informant was a long-standing member of the 'Socialist Unity Party', who now remains a member of its successor, the PDS. I understand that **millions** have left the party - mostly careerists who had no strong convictions. (There seems to be something wrong with a system which **requires** party membership for all sorts of responsible jobs.) However, as a result of this mass exodus, a new party is emerging which is far better than its predecessor. Hans Modrow and Gregor Gysi, the new Secretary, are honest people of principle.

Yet it is people like Modrow and Gysi, who criticised the Honecker regime when it was risky to do so, who are now being blamed for past mistakes and scandals. It is unfair because the very people who are attacking these comrades are often the same people who, when they were in the party, kept quiet. The popular press, especially the foreign-owned press, such as 'Das

EUROPE

Bild', are now daily screaming for revenge against all communists whatever their record.

Take education, for instance. Headteachers who still remain in the party (PDS) are now required by law, to re-apply for their posts. They must do so in competition with one rival candidate, who will be an "anti-communist" teacher. In one case I came across, the head has remained a member of the PDS. He has an excellent reputation, and 80% of the teachers at his school support him. But, because of the new law, besides the teachers, all the parents and all the children over 16 will have a vote. The other candidate, a right-winger, has a less than outstanding record as a teacher but he has sought popularity among the children by being easy and not too demanding. The parents, of course, will be influenced by the tabloids. So the outcome is uncertain. The ludicrous thing is that, after all this voting, the local council can over-rule the decision if they are so minded.

The East German regime began with much goodwill and enthusiasm. My friend showed me a photograph of herself among a group of women amidst piles of rubble in the devastated city. They were among thousands of volunteers throughout the country whose job it was to knock the mortar off the old bricks so that they could be re-used for rebuilding the city. My friend said she will never forget the selfless enthusiasm of those early days.

ALIENATION

But this enthusiasm - for working for the common good and for the future - gradually waned. In the end, in spite of undoubted achievements, there was much alienation. The workers, especially in the south, became cynical and resigned. And this was not just because of the corruption at the top. This was suspected although people were not aware of the full extent of it. But even if the leaders had been incorruptible, the system just didn't work. In spite of the huge natural resources and a skilled workforce, there was something basically wrong with the planning system. It stifled plain-speaking, initiative and creativity. The system did not produce the right quality goods. There was appalling waste, over-manning, erratic supplies of



Scenes of Celebration - Wenceslas Square in Prague, Nov. 1989

raw materials and frequent bottlenecks. Small shops and workshops were mostly forbidden, which was frustrating for both producer and consumer. The system was rigid and inflexible. The leadership did not trust the workers and peasants, and eventually this attitude was reciprocated.

THE PRICE OF UNITY

Now, of course, there are many nasty things happening in East Germany, as the PDS and others forecast would happen if there was over-hasty re-unification. West German speculators are pouring into the East buying up homes at knock-down prices. Perfectly well-run enterprises (and there are quite a few) find they cannot sell their products because the Eastern wholesalers have been bought up by West German capitalists who force shops to buy only from the West. When the enterprise can no longer pay its workers, it is then acquired by West German big business at a price a long way below its true value. The workers, as always, will be paying the price of these changes. Unemployment is soaring...

West German food companies are threatening to ruin East German co-operative farms. By manipulating and gaining control of Eastern wholesalers, they are pushing their attractively packaged produce into the Eastern food shops, driving out the East German co-operatives. For the most part, the farmers don't want to leave the co-

operatives, but strenuous efforts are being made by the Christian Democratic government in the East to break them up and privatise them.

THE VICTORY OF CAPITALISM?

I would like to conclude with a quote from John Kenneth Galbraith, the American economist, on the changes in Central Europe, (from the 'Financial Times', July 1990). He railed against the 'primitive ideology' of western capitalists who

advocated unemployment, inflation and slashed living standards as crucial therapy for the creaking, former communist-run economies. "This, I choose my words carefully, is insanity," he said. Mr Galbraith said it was irrelevant whether the state continued to own industry provided it was prepared to give companies the autonomy to determine their own performances.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said recently: "Socialism may have failed, but can we really say that capitalism has succeeded?" My only objection to this remark is that the system he says may have failed is not socialism. True democratic socialism does not exist anywhere in the world, so in no way can one say that it has failed. It is a healthy sign that the leaders of the PDS in East Germany have shown they are fully aware of this. ■

CONTRIBUTED

PALESTINIAN VIEWS:

A Solution in the Gulf

The United Leadership of the Uprising (ULLU) has strongly opposed the deployment of western forces in the Gulf from the outset, and called upon the people of the 1967 occupied territories of Palestine to devote the whole month of September to protesting against US military intervention. It has also indicated how it would like to see the crisis resolved. In

its 61st leaflet, it declared:

"We salute the efforts of our Palestinian leadership to contain the Gulf crisis and settle it through fraternal dialogue in an Arab framework calculated to secure the Arab nation's higher interests."

It went on: "We in the United Leadership of the Uprising support the Palestinian initiative's encouragement of

Arab efforts to contain the crisis, including the efforts of Iraq itself. We call upon all parties to respond to this initiative, work toward military pullouts from the Gulf region and institute arrangements that guarantee the higher Arab interests and the interests of each Arab party in the framework of international law."

Concerning the PLO's efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis, 'Intifada', a bulletin published by the Tunis-based Intifada Solidarity Committee, carried the following item in its 6th September issue:



300 Jordanian women protesting near the American Embassy in Amman

Iraq's Arms

One of the ironies of the confrontation in the Gulf is that the non-Arab states ranged against Iraq helped it develop the military strength with which it now faces them.

During the Iran-Iraq War, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute listed as major arms suppliers to Iraq: USA, USSR, China, France, West and East Germany, Italy, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Austria, Switzerland, Egypt, Jordan, North Korea, Brazil and Chile. Nine of these countries were also major suppliers to Iran.

But Britain also played its part. Prior to the British government's decision to ban the export of eight specified chemicals to Iran or Iraq in 1984, Department of Trade figures show that, in 1983, British firms exported to Iraq 2,000 kilos of methyl phosphonyl difluoride and 38,000 kilos of dimethyl

methylphosphonate, both of which are ingredients of the nerve gas, sarin. A year earlier, a British company, Primary Medical Aid, has sold 10,000 chemical weapon protection kits to Iraq, which a specialist believed would only be needed for people involved in making chemical weapons or troops advancing into areas where Iraq had used such weapons, as Iran did not possess chemical weapons at the time.

While for the most of the Iran-Iraq War, Britain was not a major arms supplier, it did train Iraqi military personnel. The training programme was terminated this year following the execution of journalist, Farzad Bazoft, by Iraq. It then emerged that there were four Iraqis studying at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and two at the naval school at Cosham, near Portsmouth.

Most of this information comes from newsletters of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ.

PEACE IN THE GULF
THE PALESTINIAN-ARAB
SOLUTION

Palestine Liberation Organisation sources said last week that the Palestinian plan for peace in the Gulf worked out in cooperation with several Arab states, calls for an Arab summit conference in Morocco or Algeria, where a committee of Arab heads of state would be mandated to recommend a settlement of the Iraq-Kuwait dispute based on four major guidelines:

* The replacement of US and allied troops by a UN force, and the reduction of American military presence from offensive to defensive proportions;

* The deployment of an Arab force in areas to be agreed upon by the parties to the conflict - possibly inside Kuwait or as buffer between the UN troops and the Iraqi army;

* A UN-supervised referendum in Kuwait on the country's future; and

* Mutual recognition of legitimate territorial and financial claims by the parties to the conflict.

PLO spokesman, Bassam Abu-Sharif, said in a statement issued in Tunis last week that the plan, the details of which were being kept under wraps for the time being, was not a purely Palestinian initiative but the work of several Arab mediators.

In addition to the shuttle diplomacy of PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat, and his aides, mediation efforts have been undertaken by the Jordanian, Sudanese, Yemeni and Algerian governments.

From 'Palestine Solidarity', No.47, available from PSC, BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX.

Endgame in Kampuchea?

Significant obstacles are still to be resolved but an agreed framework has been accepted by all parties to the conflict in Kampuchea.

In early September, a secret visit to Beijing by senior members of Vietnam's government - the Party Secretary, Nguyen Van Linh, Prime Minister, Do Muoi and former Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong - assured China of Vietnam's acceptance of the UN peaceplan for Kampuchea.

The Kampuchean parties have accepted the proposal from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council for a Supreme National Council to represent the country and the presence of up to 10,000 peace-keeping troops and another 10,000 administrative, prior to UN-supervised elections.

There are problems over the division of the twelve seats on the proposed Supreme National Council (SNC). Hun Sen wants equal status with Prince Sihanouk, in an attempt to gain recognition as a separate government on a par with the UN-recognised Coalition Government.

The Kampuchean seat at the UN has been left "temporarily unattended" until the composition of the SNC has been agreed.

While an end to the conflict

triggered by Vietnam's invasion in December 1978 is to be welcomed, there must be some concern that the five permanent powers are virtually ramming through their own solution, as none of the Kampuchean parties want to be seen as obstructing a settlement.

Hun Sen has been forced to abandon his rejection of past peace talk offers from the Coalition Government by the battlefield advances of the principal resistance force - the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) Party, invariably referred to as the 'Khmer Rouge' - and the weakness of its own, and principal backer.

For years, Vietnam claimed its occupation of Kampuchea was "irreversible". Today, it accepts the UN plan which dismantles its client regime in Phnom Penh. The secret visit to Beijing points to an end to "dark clouds over Sino-Vietnamese relations" and putting the 1979 border war behind them leading to an agreement over Kampuchea.

The US is improving relations with Vietnam, lifting its trade embargo, as Hanoi cooperates in securing a Kampuchean settlement by leaning on the people it put into office.

REFORM IN VIETNAM

Vietnam has adopted "a

renovation programme", more ambitious than any seen in Eastern Europe, embracing the use of market forces, IMF prescriptions on fiscal, monetary and foreign exchange policies, land reform and liberal foreign investment incentives.

Vietnam's expansionism led to international isolation that damaged attempts at national reconstruction. In the late-1980's, problems were exacerbated by changes in Eastern Europe, cuts in aid from the Soviet Union (estimated at 1 billion roubles a year) and a shift to acquiesce with the five permanent powers at the UN - USA, UK, France, the Soviet Union and China. Cutting their losses at this point and going along with an imposed settlement fits in with Vietnam's leadership plans to follow in the footsteps of Asia's "dragon" economies.

BEGINNING OF THE PEACE

For the Kampuchean people, the chance of the restoration of national independence and self-determination is not without difficulties. But victory is in sight. What will be upmost in the mind of Kampuchean patriots, is that unlike Vietnam, they do not lose the peace by failing to relieve the country's abject poverty.

Yankees going home

The two largest overseas US bases were not included in last month's announcement of cuts in US military spending.

The Clark Air base and Subic Bay naval base in the Philippines have long been the target of popular campaigns. Hundreds of demonstrators regularly picket the bases as an affront to national sovereignty and damaging to the country's economic and social life.

Until recently, President Aquino has fudged the issue. But she has been forced by mass nationalist sentiment to declare: "The time for decision is now."

The leases on the bases, negotiated in 1948, come to an end next September. But there is no sign of US withdrawal.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) have ended their unilateral ceasefire, charging Aquino with secretly forging a deal to ensure the continued presence of the US

military.

Richard Armitage, adviser to President Bush, claimed that time was needed to allow the Philippines Armed Forces to take on greater responsibilities. It is clear that the US is worried about the progress of the national democratic revolution led by the CPP.

The US wants a decision on complete withdrawal deferred into the next century in the hope that whoever replaces Aquino will have more success in suppressing the Filipino revolution.

"LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT"

A US withdrawal would weaken the ability of the US to oversee the 'low intensity conflict' strategy drawn up in Washington and put into practice in the rural areas of the Philippines.

Armitage explained that an American presence was needed

so that her allies could "adjust to a world in which superpower rivalry is being replaced" by the heightened importance of regional issues.

The US defence budget of £149 billion represents a cut for the US military. The cutbacks affect 151 bases in ten countries, and reflect the changing scene in Europe and pre-Gulf budget constraints.

Far from representing genuine de-militarisation, a closer look at the 151 bases affected - 109 in Germany - shows that they include the closure of athletic fields, 5-man stations, the German Pershing-2 missiles and the Torrejon air base in Spain, now redundant as the F-16s stationed there have been ordered to leave by the Spanish government.

The Filipino people have few illusions that they can rely on Aquino to issue the order "Yankee, go home!".

A PAPER WALL

This month marks the second anniversary of the British Government's ban on broadcasting of Sinn Fein. We print below extracts from the address given by Gerry Adams to a press conference in October 1989 on the first anniversary of the ban. The press conference was crowded with representatives from the world's media, but he cannot be shown giving his address in the UK.

'The Thatcher Government's censorship law has failed to defeat Irish republicanism.... It has also denied citizens the right to information, Sinn Fein its right to express opinions, and Sinn Fein voters their right to have their views articulated in the broadcasting media. More importantly than all this, the censorship law has succeeded in perpetuating the conflict.... It has helped to create an unbalanced view of the nature and the cause of the British occupation in Ireland. Rather than inform it has disinformed....

'British censorship is not new in Ireland. It predates the current censorship laws. It has been most successful in the maintenance of the paper wall which the British Government has erected around Ireland. The absence of even one permanent foreign correspondent from any of the main foreign media means that the rest of the world, most of the time, gets the British propaganda view. Writing or broadcasting about Ireland from London is like monitoring the Vietnam war from Washington or the situation on the West Bank or the Gaza Strip from Tel Aviv....

THEY HAVE MORE PRACTICE

'The British military occupation of the North of Ireland differs from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the racist government of South Africa only in its level of sophistication. That the British are more sophisticated is not coincidence. They have more practice. In every other way the tactics of the oppressors are identical. The direct or tacit encouragement of paramilitary death squads, the execution of political opponents, arrest and imprisonment without trial, torture of political

detainees, mass show trials, punitive search operations, censorship, internal exile and exclusion orders are all tactics which the British Government have employed and continue to employ against the nationalist community in the North of Ireland....

THE BRITISH HAVE NO SOLUTION

'The only real contribution Britain make towards the creation of... a just and peaceful society in Ireland is disengagement.

'While Britain remains, its military chiefs have conceded, the IRA will remain also. Why the IRA, a guerilla army active in the occupied zone, remains undefeated after 20 years, is itself a question which the media, with a few notable exceptions, has largely ignored.... Surely it is obvious that the reason the IRA is able to continue is because it has support. So too has Sinn Fein. Our percentage of the vote is 11.4%. We are now the second largest party in Belfast City, a fact completely ignored by our opponents.



'The British Government has clearly failed to defeat us. Thatcher and her cronies should stop trying to achieve the impossible. They should talk peace. They should start this process now.'

Wallace Affair

Colin Wallace, the British army "information officer" who was sacked from his job in the North of Ireland in 1975 has won £30,000 compensation from the Ministry of Defence for unfair dismissal.

Wallace was officially dismissed for leaking restricted documents to a journalist. But revelations he has made about the activities of the British army in the Six Counties have indicated a cover-up of a more sinister disinformation campaign.

The compensation was awarded after an inquiry by David Calcutt QC. Tom King instructed Calcutt not to make any report on his findings but Calcutt ignored this. He discovered during the course of his investigations that shortly before Wallace's appeal against dismissal was heard by the British Civil Service Appeal Board in October 1975, MI5 agents met with the chairperson of the board, Sir Leslie Williams. He concluded that it was at this meeting that the outcome

of the appeal was decided. Colin Wallace has said that King's request that Calcutt not file a report was "not the action of a minister trying to establish the truth. It is the action of a minister who knows what the situation is and is trying to limit the amount of information that goes on public record."

Wallace claims that he lost his job in 1975 because he complained that "Clockwork Orange", a disinformation campaign aimed against the Republican Movement had got out of control and had developed into the smearing of Six Counties' and British politicians. As part of "Clockwork Orange", crown forces in the North covered up for eight years the rape and sexual abuse of youngsters at Kinora Boys' Home by different people, including loyalist politicians.

Throughout the affair, the British media has focussed on the allegations of the smear campaign against Wilson's government. But the far more important question of what British secret services are doing in the North of Ireland has been largely ignored.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I agree with September's issue of 'Class Struggle' that the two main issues in the Gulf are self-determination for Kuwait and opposition to US-headed imperialist intervention in the Gulf.

I have no sympathy with Saddam Hussein.

However, I feel your emphasis is wrong. The two issues are not equal. The situation has developed such that the main issue is opposition to imperialist intervention.

A Birmingham reader

Dear Editor,

Having just had the "Last Night of the Proms" on telly I realised that yet another Proms season has gone by without one single woman composer or woman conductor being performed! This is a good example of how deep and inbred into the system is women's oppression despite all the talk these days about equality.

This summer, the International Festival of Women in Music was held in Chard, Somerset. The event was extremely successful and full of life with all types of music written and performed by women. We were able to start to reclaim a little of our hidden history and there were workshops and discussions to encourage women

to challenge wrong beliefs and discrimination about women.

The other area where a challenge is being made is in pop music where more and more women are leading and playing music. When we have a Proms season with more women featured than men we will know we've really made progress towards equality. Until then, just question everything male historians and male institutions tell you!

Yours in struggle,

West Country reader.

Dear Editor,

Last week I went to a meeting about the Poll Tax.

The summonses to court have started in Birmingham and at present are being processed at the rate of about 300 a week. The speaker said that, at that rate, it would take about two and a half years to hear the cases of all those who haven't paid. Each year, the process starts all over again. So provided people make full use of their legal rights, it should be possible to block up the process somewhat.

But the government has been clever. It has already stipulated what is and what is not a legal defence. And the fact of being unable to pay because you can't afford it, is apparently not a legal defence. Still, they can't

judge whether your defence is legal or not, until they've heard it.

In the speaker's opinion, the most likely method to be used to recover the poll tax debts is the bailiffs. And he warned us to be on our guard. The bailiffs can't break your door down to gain entry to your house. But once they have a foot in the door, they can use force to push it open. They can also crawl through an open window. They are not likely to say who they are until they are inside. They might well pretend to be the gas man, for example.

Once inside, they can "take walking possession" of your goods by sticking a notice on them. They don't take them straight away. They come back for them a few days later. That gives you time to pay up if you are able to.

He also warned us that the bailiffs might add their own costs to the court costs for each visit they make. It has been known for them to charge £50 a visit, which can work out expensive.

However, all this is theoretical for most people because if you can't pay, you can't pay. And that's all there is to it. Adding extra costs onto a bill which is already too large is not a sensible way of getting people to pay the bill.

The bailiffs in Birmingham (and in most places, I should imagine) are known to the anti-poll tax campaigners and can be resisted if people stand together.

A Handsworth reader.

A People's Hero



Doctor Norman Bethune, a member of the Canadian Communist Party, died of blood-poisoning on 12th November, 1939. He was, at that time, head of medical services for Mao's Eight Route Army fighting against the Japanese occupation of China.

A new Canadian film, 'Bethune - the Making of a Hero' charts the life and struggles of this fine internationalist. The film starts from his time as a surgeon in Canada, where

his first political involvement was in the campaign for free medical care and follows Bethune's life through his realisation that changing the medical system was not enough. It was the whole rotten system that had to be overthrown.

Bethune played a leading role in the anti-fascist struggle in Canada and also travelled to Soviet Russia to see for himself that revolution really could bring big improvements for ordinary people.

His spirit of internationalism and self-sacrifice took him to Spain where he contributed to the Republican struggle against Franco. There he pioneered battlefield medical techniques.

Bethune's last battle was alongside the Chinese Communist Party in which his

field hospitals saved the lives of many patriotic fighters.

This film is critical of Bethune's attitudes to women and his excessive drinking, for which he was ordered out of Spain.

Despite showing these weaknesses, the film is positive and Bethune's politics are clearly shown. All in all, it is an inspiring film which you should see if you get the chance.

"What kind of spirit is this that makes a foreigner selflessly adopt the cause of the Chinese people as his own? It is the spirit of internationalism, the spirit of communism, from which every Chinese Communist must learn."

Mao Zedong - In Memory of Norman Bethune, December 1939.

In the new 'October, we are pleased to reprint an English summary of a book by a leading comrade in the Norwegian Marxist Leninist-Party (AKP-ML). The AKP(ML) has for many years been active in the Women's Front in Norway. The contribution by this comrade, Kjersti Ericsson, is therefore based firmly in a combination of theory and practice.

The article on Feminism and the Left in India and Sri Lanka also shows how active women have been. The article makes it clear that the role of women and the women's movement is being debated and discussed at many different levels within the Left.

The basic position of the RCL is that we have to apply the scientific method of Marxism to the question of women but that many of the positions held by the Left on women are a crude economist version of Marxism.

In this issue of 'October', we try to take this debate forward by looking at some of the arguments around the basis of women's oppression, an important question if we aim to build a society which removes the basis for oppression as a pre-condition for moving to full liberation. We look at the question of reproductive rights, a key aspect of women's oppression. And we try to put the struggle for women's liberation within the context of the overall struggle against imperialism.

We hope that this journal will take the debate forward. We look forward to hearing the views of our readers and receiving contributions from you.

'Class Struggle' is the political paper of the Revolutionary Communist League.

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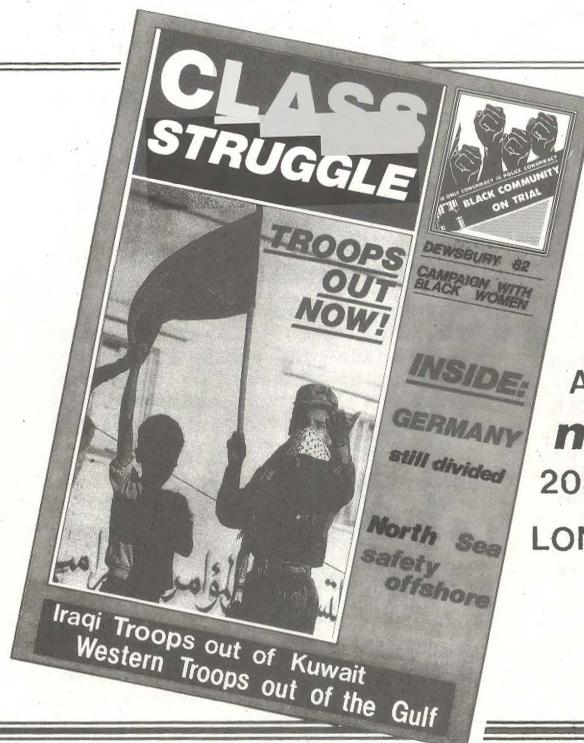
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