

# The Socialist

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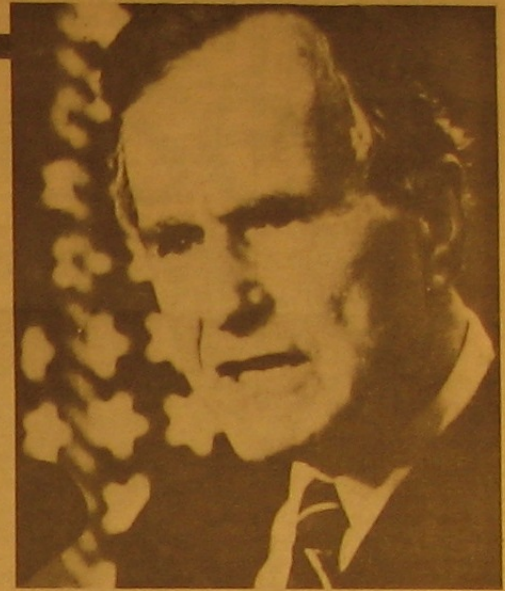
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## WANTED FOR MURDER...

# George Bush



**IRAQ has been destroyed.**

■ Its cities are without water, power or communications.

Cholera has broken out whilst medical services have largely collapsed.

Tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been blown apart and burned—in their homes and on the street, in workplaces, markets and mosques.

Factories, roads and bridges have been destroyed.

■ Now 100,000 US troops have invaded the south of Iraq, poised to massacre retreating Iraqi soldiers.

Why? So that the world's greatest power can control the world's greatest source of oil; so that the US can dominate the "New World Order".

This murder and destruction is the work of George Bush—war criminal—backed every inch of the way by Bob Hawke and the Labor government.

■ Today, the imperialists appear to be winning the war.

But they cannot win the peace.

They have created an anger—a deep and burning hatred of everything they stand for—which will not be satisfied until their power to bomb and kill and plunder has been broken.

# WAR

# CRIMINAL





**A War for democracy?**  
"We need the oil. It's nice to talk about standing up for freedom but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are not exactly democracies."  
—George Bush, Time magazine, 20 August 1990

**A war to defend the rights of small nations?**  
I see no particular reason why post-war, its (Iraq's) territorial integrity should be respected. It was brought into being as an artificial construct. There is no compelling reason why it should not now be dismantled in the same way.  
—John Stone, in the Financial Review

**The Price of oil**  
Up to the start of the bombing, the US invasion of the Gulf cost \$34 billion. It is estimated that the next 3 months will cost \$45 billion. By Easter the invasion will have cost over \$4 600 for every Iraqi man, woman, and child.

**"This is not another Vietnam #1"**  
US troop numbers in the Gulf have just passed the peak US troop number of 530 000 in Vietnam in 1969. Other countries have contributed a further 200 000 troops to the invasion.

**"This is not another Vietnam #2"**  
"To liberate the village, we had to destroy it."  
—Officer during the Vietnam war.  
"If the flattening of Kuwait is the liberation of Kuwait, I would have that."  
—Sheik Ali Al Sabah, former Kuwaiti minister.

**"This is not another Vietnam #3"**  
"The mood at the Pentagon is that the US is finally able to impose its high-tech will on a defiant Third World after the long frustration in the jungles of South East Asia."  
—The British Guardian

**History repeats**  
Neither Hussein nor Bush were the first to launch war against the Kurds. That doubtful honour goes to Britain, which launched an attack upon the Kurds in 1920. Winston Churchill was pushing for the use of mustard gas.

**The pain of exile**  
Kuwait's former ruling family continues to earn \$20m per day from the over \$100 billion worth of investments it owns on the world's stock markets.

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# Israel's brutal ambitions

**ALL THE Allies are jockeying for position in anticipation of the post-war carve up, none more so than Israel.**

Their greatest concern is the territories seized in the 1967 war and controlled by the military ever since. When Israeli PM Shamir included in his government Rehavam Ze'evi, who advocates "transfer" (expulsion) of the Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza, liberals and even some members of Shamir's own Likud party were horrified.

The British Guardian newspaper wailed that this contradicts "the very ethic of the Jewish state."

But it is part of a pattern. Back in August, the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* reported that "a member of (Shamir's) entourage said that if... the Palestinians in the territories are... emboldened enough (by the war) to cause us problems, they will find themselves outside Israel's borders."

Two weeks later, another journalist wrote of the right-wing politicians:

They hope... (that after the war) all options will be open, including the establishment of a Palestinian state of sorts in Jordan.

In November, Shamir himself made what the Israeli press reported as "the most extremist declaration by an Israeli prime minister since 1948". He told Likud politicians that his government was committed to the ideal of Israel extending from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River.

Proposals for an international conference to resolve the Palestinian problem, now seem doomed. A foreign observer reports that Likud party politicians are "smiling from ear to ear. They are saying, 'You can kiss the international conference goodbye'."

So what has this all meant for the Palestinians?

The prolonged curfew has caused much suffering, and reportedly reduced some people to eating mice.



ABOVE: Palestinian women in Bethlehem—"We have been reduced to being beggars."

The Israelis distributed gas masks to only a few Palestinians. Before the war started, the Arabic language television delayed for two months a program on protection from chemical weapons. When Palestinian doctors tried to stock up on essentials such as aspirin, they found the Israeli army had withdrawn this medication completely from the market.

Emergency workers such as medical personnel were supposed to be exempt from the curfew, but Israeli military prevented many from functioning.

Worst-off are the thousands of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons and detention camps. They have no safe sealed rooms and no gas masks. Fully 88 per cent of Palestinian prisoners are being held in or near Israeli military installations, likely targets of attack.

So much for outrage over "human shields"!

One Israeli MP, citing high ranking sources, charged that the government was preparing to deport at least 1200 Palestinians.

Peace Now revealed plans for army units to carry out a mass expulsion of West Bank Palestinians.

Ze'evi talks of "voluntary" transfer. But Israel's history shows that if you persecute people enough, they may eventually "volunteer" to leave.

—by Janey Stone

**STOP THIS RACIST FRAME UP**

WHILE Hawke weeps for the sheikhs of "poor little Kuwait", back home a new chapter in the persecution of Aboriginal people is about to open up.

On 25 March, seventeen Aboriginal people are to go on trial in Bathurst (NSW) over the so-called "Brewarrina riot".

Albert "Sonny" Bates faces life imprisonment if convicted of a conspiracy to murder charge, while 18 face the possibility of 14 years jail over charges of riotous assembly and assault.

The charges are a complete frame up and must be fought.

The so-called "riot" came after Lloyd Boney was found hanging in the Brewarrina lockup in 1987.

After his funeral, about 150 people gathered in a local park to socialise. From the balcony of the hotel opposite the pub, a racist mob of about 100 men, mostly members of the Tactical Response Group—the killers of David Gundy—lined up beside him with their guns trained on the crowd.

No wonder a few of the young people present attacked the hotel.

At the time, there were no arrests. Next day the cops charged the 17.

One of those picked up was Arthur Murray, who has worked to expose police murders ever since his son Eddie was hung in the Wee Wee lockup in 1981. Arthur's daughter, Anna, the only woman targeted, also faces riot and assault charges.

Arthur Murray told *The Socialist*, "We were charged because we're black. Black people were dying like flies."

**ALP financial screwup**

WE HAVE Labor governments in crisis all over the place, and the opposition threatening to block Supply in the Victorian upper house.

While taxpayers continue to goggle at the vast sums of money Labor blew in Victoria and WA, the latest fiasco is the State Bank of South Australia. The bank has had loans amounting to \$2.5 billion, and Premier John Bannon has to spend heaps to bail it out.

By now quite a few Labor supporters have concluded that the capitalists and their political representatives make better economic managers.

This would be completely mistaken. The problem is only partly how the Labor governments have run things. Part of it is the way they left management of key financial institutions to managers brought in from the private sector. They then let them run them into the ground.

Take the State Bank of Victoria.

**RACIST MOBS ATTACK**

**WOMEN continue to take the brunt of racist attacks against Arab people in this country.**

An Iranian family living in Melbourne's Western Suburbs told us of the harassment Iranian women suffer. Because of the Jilbab they are assumed to be Arabs.

One woman, when stopped for speeding was asked by the cop if she supported Saddam Hussein.

Another was refused service at a petrol station.

Another report said that Muslim women have had their cars rammed in car parks and even Hindu women have had their scarves pulled off in street attacks.

In the US too, physical attacks on Arabic people continue. In Toledo a businessman was beaten senseless by a white supremacist mob. In Kansas City a Palestinian family was fired at by a gunman.

In Britain up to 200 Iraqis are still in detention. Many of them are well known anti-Hussein activists. They face deportation and are at the mercy of an appointed board which it is difficult to file an appeal with. Palestinians have been victimised as well. One, has been politically inactive for more than 20 years, it is likely he will be deported to Jordan, leaving two children behind.

In Spain, Germany, Greece and France thousands of Muslims and Arabs have either been detained or are being kept under surveillance. Intelligence units from across Europe not long ago held secret meetings to discuss tactics and swap information.

In Britain a bus load of Yemenis on their way to school was stoned.

In France racist groups are said to be buying up large quantities of arms. One gun shop in Marseilles has experienced a 500 per cent increase in sales.

## Horror movies delight generals

ON THE first day of the ground war triumphant Coalition commanders showed reporters a video of a helicopter attack. Military censors ensured the rest of us never saw it. But the US reporter John Balzar described the film:

"Iraqi infantry soldiers, bewildered and terrified, jarred from their sleep, were fleeing their bunkers under a hailstorm of fire. One by one they were cut down by attackers they couldn't see or understand. Some were literally blown to bits by bursts of 30mm exploding cannon shells. One man dropped, writhed on the ground and struggled to his feet. Another burst through his apartment. The Iraqi soldiers ran with nowhere to hide. These are not bridges exploding or airplane hangers. They are men."

## Australian imperialism

THE GULF WAR is making Australia's military policies more aggressive. Policies of "mainland defence", are giving way to a new era of "forward defence", which means Canberra wants to throw its weight around in Asia and the Pacific.

The Gulf war has convinced both Bob Hawke and John Hewson that this is now increasingly possible and desirable.

"Forward defence" is nothing new: it's the policy that brought us Vietnam. The military strategists argued, Australia had to do its share in America's imperialist adventures. This became the justification for our involvement in Vietnam and for locating US spy bases at Nurrungar and Pine Gap.

So for example the bases were not imposed on Australia by the USA. Recently released documents show that the Menzies government lobbied the Americans for twelve years because of "the long term military advantages".

The policy took a big blow with the defeat in Indochina.

Canberra was forced to turn to "mainland defence". The Australian ruling class was never happy with this state of affairs. The 1986 Dibb Report, for example, conceded that there were "no current or prospective" military threats to this country, yet it still insisted the:

...structure required to protect our interests... entails substantial capabilities for operations further afield.

## POWER

The Americans are reasserting their power world-wide trying to reverse the effects of Vietnam. Hawke and Hewson are hot on the scent: this is Australia's chance to get back into the action.

An article in the 4 February *Financial Review* spells out the argument:

It is a salient fact that Australia, just like the US, will probably never have to be defended from its own shores... Defences... will have... to be made far from these shores. Ergo Korea, Vietnam, and now Kuwait... lines of defence in today's world lie not on borders nor even on one's own region.

Australian interference anywhere in the world is justified as "defence".

The author, John Levis goes on to add that the death and injury to the soldiers must be seen as an "occupational hazard" that goes with the job. The troops ought to be pleased because active duty hones their skills to an extent that training never can.

Although it is distasteful, John writes, "to start putting dollar values on men's lives" soldiers ought to be pleased that the "biggest professional event of their generation"—the Gulf War, is being paid for by the Japanese, Germans and Saudis.

That's a pretty good deal! When was the last time we had a "just war" with all cash costs covered?

Opposition to this new Australian militarism must be

## The Socialist GULF WAR FUND

TO MAKE sure that socialist arguments are heard in the anti-war movement, *The Socialist's* coming out fortnightly instead of monthly. To sustain this we need \$10,000 worth of new equipment as well as extra for running costs.

Will you help us?

In the past four weeks we've raised \$2504 for a total of \$4205. Public meeting collections: Meib \$206, \$176, \$22.

Thanks to: SB \$150, US \$70, DG \$60, MA \$1000, GW \$100, LP \$30, MT \$26, RM \$54, BR \$100, TG \$10, CF \$100, GB \$30, KH \$50, MR \$5, MG \$40, ML \$20, MM \$40, BR \$130, DM \$10, NW \$20, RM \$100, TT \$4, SB \$2, CW \$3.

## NEW PAMPHLET ON THE GULF!

**NO BLOOD FOR OIL!**

Why there's a war in the Gulf—and how to stop it.

NO BLOOD FOR OIL outlines the roots of the war, exposes the myths about Israel and shows how the anti-war movement can go forward.

Available for \$3.00 (plus \$1.00 post) from Bookmarks, GPO Box 1473N, Melbourne, 3001 or your local ISO branch.

## As 100,000 US troops invade Iraq...

# US war aims exposed

THE GROUND WAR in the Gulf proves beyond doubt that George Bush never wanted peace; that he always wanted the chance to bomb, to kill and maim.

Bush wanted a slaughter in the Gulf—and Bob Hawke backed him all the way.

That was clear when they contemptuously dismissed Gorbachev's so-called "peace plan".

It wasn't enough that Saddam had effectively surrendered—promising to withdraw from Kuwait unconditionally.

It wasn't enough that he had dropped all reference to Palestine and Lebanon.

It wasn't enough that Iraq's cities were without water, electricity, or communications—that food was scarce and medical services collapsing, that tens of thousands of civilians had been buried, blown apart and maimed by the most intense bombardment in history.

Like generations of imperialists before them, Bush and Hawke want to reduce their enemies to the level of animals, to parade them before the world as an example to others who might think of challenging their power.

Such has been the fate of every victim of the big powers from the Aboriginal people through to the Vietnamese 20 years ago.

So when Iraq announced it was

actually pulling out of Kuwait, the US administration claimed "there was nothing to respond to".

Bush's mouthpiece, Marlin Fitzwater said, "The war goes on". A White House statement warned, "we will consider retreating combat units as a movement of war," and a US military official made it clear that Iraqi soldiers returning home "are going to be attacked... If see a tank rolling, I don't care which way it is rolling."

With 100,000 troops already in Iraq, a senior Pentagon official said the US expected to finish the war "in possession of large chunks of south-eastern Iraq". It will use this occupying force to impose a puppet regime on the country.

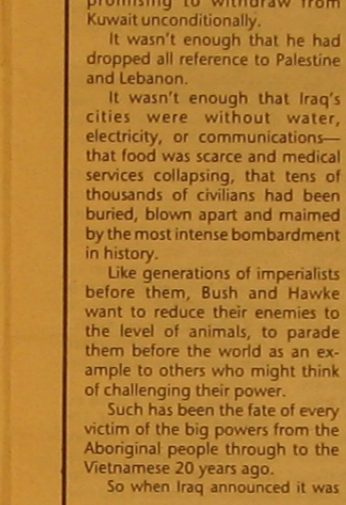
So much for the pitiful lie that the war was to "liberate Kuwait".

It is not only Iraq that will be punished by the US and its allies. Who, now, will stop Israel's revenge against the Palestinians?

And that may not be the worst. Interviewed by journalist Robert Fisk about the future of Kuwait's half a million Palestinians, one official, "...smiled and, in a very quick gesture, ran a finger in front of his throat. 'I don't want to get into that,' he said. 'Let's hope it's not as bad as Sabra and Shatila.'"

—a reference to the mass slaughter of Palestinians during Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Now the veil is torn aside from all the talk of international order and peace and the real face of US imperialism can be seen.



However the war is going to solve none of the problems facing American imperialism in its decay. It will not solve the problem of America's aging and uncompetitive industries; nor will it stabilise America's crisis-ridden financial system. Even with a US victory the military will continue to take billions of dollars that are needed for investment.

And within the imperialist system itself are the forces that can bring it down.

## CONTROL

Every previous war between the Arabs and the West has been followed by revolutionary upheavals.

Israel's victory in 1948 was followed by the overthrow of Egypt's King Farouk; the Suez intervention in 1956 by the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy; the 1967 war by the rise of the PLO and the 1973 war by upheaval in Lebanon that saw the Palestinians and Shi'ite poor on the brink of winning the civil war.

The spectacle of a massive US military presence lorded it over an utterly destroyed Iraq will add to the extreme anger already felt in the region and further weaken the fragile grip of some of the Arab governments allied to the US.

For American workers, the victory will turn sour very quickly, recession, will step up their wage cutting and union busting. The government will impose more cuts to health and services.

The sight of the US government being paid protect the obscene wealth of Saudi and Kuwaiti sheiks—while Americans go homeless and the people of Iraq are reduced to absolute misery—can lead to a minority to start making the link between the attack on the Arab people and the attack on their own living conditions.

In the short term, success in the Gulf will strengthen the right and militarists everywhere.

There will be more calls to send in the marines to deal with problems in the Third World, and Bush will, at least initially, find less opposition to doing so.

In Australia, both the Liberal Party and the Labor right will initially be stronger and the anti-war movement will find it

harder to mobilise large numbers of people—as it has already. But this mood will be evaporate as the realities of recession and US domination in the Gulf sink in. It is possible we will find some pessimism around the anti-war movement.

But many of the thousands who have been mobilised will want to keep fighting, irrespective of the state of the movement.

To do that, the small actions being carried out by a number of the coalitions—such as picketing Hawke, blockading the Stock Exchange and so on—must be kept up so that the most intransigent and serious activists remain mobilised and politicised.

But action is not enough. Activists who want to continue the fight against US imperialism need to come to grips with the nature of the system that gave rise to this outrage.

And they need a strategy for linking all the abuses of the system to the force that can ultimately smash it—the working class both in the West and the Arab world.

—by Phil Griffiths

**Join the International Socialist Organisation**

Please send me more information about how socialists are organising to stop the Gulf war.

I want to join the International Socialist Organisation

Name: .....

Address: .....

Phone: .....

Clip and post to ISO GPO Box 1473N Melbourne, 3001

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# STUDENTS TARGET ARMY RECRUITERS

EVEN BEFORE the universities returned, small groups of students were organising imaginative and militant actions against the war.

AT QUEENSLAND Uni, Students Against War targeted the Army Reserve on campus. A resolution was passed legitimising the use of force to restore peace and security if the Army's recruiting staff refused to withdraw from the university before a 1.00pm deadline.

The action was successful and the campus "liberated"—with a few scuds (four bombs) being launched to help them on their way.

In MELBOURNE, 25 students blockaded the stock exchange on 21 February.

They tied themselves in a row with sheets and chairs and tried to super-glue the door shut. Chanting "money for jobs, not profit", they spray-painted anti-war slogans on the glass and burned the Australian flag which was taken down from the flagpole.

In response, the cops hosed down the demo and arrested three people.

Provocative and militant actions like this are essential to building the anti-war movement, just as they were in the struggle over Vietnam.

Yet there is considerable resistance to them, especially from sections of the student bureaucracy.

At UNSW in SYDNEY, students are discussing the possibility of driving the Army



AT Queensland Uni, the deadline is given and the Army prepares to leave...



...but not before a few "scuds" are fired! PROTESTING outside Hawke's office in Coburg (Vic)

Reserve off their campus—using similar tactics to Queensland Uni.

Some have opposed this on the basis that it will alienate people who are against the war, but might feel sympathetic to the Army Reserve.

This ignores the permanent hostility to the army that exists on campus, but which usually lacks a political focus. It ignores that actions such as these mobilise new people who want to do something against the war.

In Melbourne, some activists are arguing that marches around the city are "boring".

This narrow vision assumes that the only people who will march are those already involved, whereas for many students it will be their first ever action.

One woman at LaTrobe Uni told us how "empowering" it was to march on the road at one of the early, small demos. She had never done it before.

This march would have remained on the footpath as a minority, including socialists, who pushed to get onto the road. Now all marches, even if only fifty, march confidently in front of the traffic.

A broadsheet being distributed around Melbourne Uni warned, "we must be wary of the spontaneity of the anger expressed in our protests." The justification was the need for a long term program to confront "the twin evils of militarism and racism".

This conservatism is madness. Now that thousands are mobilising, their spontaneity is the springboard for a whole process of radicalisation from which a whole new generation of political activists and socialists will emerge to confront "militarism and racism" and all the other evils of the system.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the Gulf Action Committee disowned the vigil. It conflicts too much with the "respectable" campaign they are oriented to—an attitude that is alienating many young people.

On the rally itself, a militant minority of 120—including

## THE ACTION CONTINUES

WHILE the incredible upsurge of anti-war activity has now levelled off, large numbers of people are continuing to demonstrate, picket and organise against the war.

In Melbourne 7000 marched on Saturday 23 February as part of the national mobilisation; in Sydney it was 4000.

In Brisbane, a rally of 900 on 24 February was violently attacked by police and 14 arrested. One person arrested on a minor charge needed five stitches to his hand; another charged with using obscene language was covered in bruises and lacerations from her arrest. A number of women were strip searched by police back at the warehouse.

ONE OF the biggest rallies was in Adelaide on 16 February when 5000 people marched in their third major action.

The rally was built, in part, by a major public meeting the Thursday before. 500 people came to hear Tom Uren and the PLO's Ali Kazak.

The movement is being built despite harassment by the Labor state government. Parliamentary speaker, Norm Peterson, ordered police to remove an anti-war vigil from the steps of Parliament House.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the Gulf Action Committee disowned the vigil. It conflicts too much with the "respectable" campaign they are oriented to—an attitude that is alienating many young people.

On the rally itself, a militant minority of 120—including

people from the SA Green Party, vigil activists and the ISO—sat down in Hindmarsh Square, blocking traffic.

In Geelong, 250 marched three times around the city centre on 15 February. The rally began with placard making, and was lived up by a group of young women who led the chanting.

WITH THE passing of the initial wave of outrage—and the huge demos that resulted—smaller actions have become more important as a way of maintaining the movement and giving a focus to those who want to be more involved.

The St Kilda (Vic) local group of the Network for Peace organised 150 people to push their way past obstructive police and march during the St Kilda Festival.

In Northcote (Vic) a public meeting attracted 130 to hear three speakers including the Imam of Preston who attacked anti-Arab racism.

On 22 February, the weekly anti-war picket of 35 people in Canberra decided to march on the Lodge, disrupting traffic. Once demonstrators were knocked unconscious when pushed over by police.

And in Sydney, a small but enthusiastic picket of 120 protested against media bias and racism on 15 February. They assembled outside Murdoch and marched to Fairfax (Receivers and Managers Appointed)—where the journalists were on strike—chanting "Mirror/Mirror on the wall, who's the liar of them all? Murdoch!"



## A 'testosterone war'?

AT THE FIRST anti-war demo in Melbourne, Democrats leader Janet Powell argued that the Gulf War was a result of male-ness—the "testosterone war".

It seems to reflect reality—the majority of presidents and generals who are running this war are men, as are the majority of soldiers and bureaucrats carrying out the orders.

Yet the latest "Newspoll", quoted in *The Australian* of 5 February, indicated that 67% of women are also in favour of the war.

Why is Margaret Thatcher so pro-war? Some feminists say she is a man, but that is surely stretching the definitions too far. Joan Kirner, the Premier of Victoria, and Environment Minister Ros Kelly are pro-war. Are they also really men?

This idea also can't explain why so many men are against this war, including Vietnam veterans like Ron Kovac ("Born on the Fourth of July").

If testosterone was to blame, men could become anti-war only through some change to their biology.

The war was not caused by one gender, but by one class of people—the ruling class.

They went to war because war suits their interests—the politicians like Bush, big business like BHP, media magnates like Murdoch hope to gain power and profits.

Men dominate in this class because of women's assigned role as child bearers and rearers.

Both the war and women's oppression have their origins in the nature of the system itself. Millions of men and women have shown they can stand up against the war. That can be the start of fighting the system that causes it.

—by Judy McVey

## Beseiged from left and right...

## IN 400 Soviet cities, troops carry out joint patrols with police.

Soviet troops still occupy Lithuania's television station. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia and Moldavia are refusing to take part in President Gorbachev's 17 March referendum on "preserving the USSR as a renewed federation" of republics. Price rises of up to 300% on milk, meat and eggs are expected in March.

The killings in Lithuania and Latvia have removed the already tarnished veneer of liberalism and democratisation once associated with Gorbachev. The threat of the mafia has been used to justify army street patrols. The strengthening of the KGB is now regarded as a pretext for a law and order campaign directed at the population at large.

Nobody believes that the recent withdrawal of 50 and 100 rouble notes was necessary to forestall some international banking threat to the USSR's economy or to deal with the black-marketeers. For most of the population it was a cheap attempt to soak up surplus roubles before the price rises in March. And it left most people worse off.

## RISES

An indication of how devastating the price rises will be to pensioners and low income earners is that the price of meat will rise to around 7.50 roubles a kilogramme out of their average income of 15 roubles a week. The average income for the population as a whole is only about 60 roubles a week.

There is a struggle for power going on in the Soviet Union. Although the referendum on preserving the USSR is suitably worded to make it as mild as possible, Gorbachev is taking no chances. The outcome of the referendum will not be legally binding. And it is possible that it could lose. Some republics are not taking part.

A campaign by Yeltsin against the referendum could dramatically influence the outcome. But Yeltsin's disagreement with Gorbachev is not about maintaining the Union but about the terms of the future treaty of union.

The social consequences of such "reforms"—unemployment and austerity measures—are familiar enough to those who have suffered from capitalist restructuring in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

The solution lies firstly in the realisation that what has existed in the Soviet Union since the late 1920s had nothing to do with socialism. It was and is a system based on a brutal ruling class exploiting the mass of workers. It was and still remains a system where rational economic and social planning cannot happen because the planners—a class of privileged bureaucrats—can not plan rationally. They have always had separate class interests from the mass of society.

Rational planning is absent from the Soviet Union for the same reason as it is from the Western economies—an exploiting class controls things.

The economic impasse in the Soviet Union is a stunning confirmation of the analysis that Russia is a capitalist system and that it is a capitalist crisis which ails it.

Secondly, the solution lies in the re-emergence of the force that Gorbachev, as well as the liberals, most fear—an organised working class movement which might take matters out of their hands.

## DIALOGUE

So on the one hand, Yeltsin accuses Gorbachev of leading a creeping dictatorship. On the other, Yeltsin has called for a "dialogue" with Moscow and appealed during the Lithuanian events to all citizens of Russia "to act in strict adherence to the law".

Other prominent liberals have responded in a similar way. Gavril Popov, mayor of Moscow, while condemning the "use of force" in Lithuania, says that "...the present situation came about through the mistaken strategy of the Baltic States themselves." He stresses again and again in an article in *Moscow News* the need for a constitutional solution.

Yeltsin, Popov and the other liberals are at best ambiguous supporters of independence for the republics and inconsistent advocates of democracy.

The dilemma of the liberals underscores the crisis that confronts Soviet society. The ruling class—including the liberals—face a disintegrating state capitalist command economy. They are unable to plot any

# GORBACHEV'S EMPIRE FALLS APART

By Ian Rintoul



ILLUSIONS in Gorbachev have disappeared rapidly.

## Albania: the cult of tyrants topples

A REVOLUTIONARY wave of strikes and demonstrations in Albania has forced another round of concessions out of Eastern Europe's last hard-line Stalinist regime.

In the capital Tirana, tanks were brought onto the streets to protect government buildings after the police, using tear gas, water cannons and plastic bullets, failed to disperse the crowd.

In Skanderbeg Square, a huge crowd cheered as a 10 metre high statue of past dictator, Enver Hoxha, came tumbling down. The statue was then carried off to the university where it was broken into small pieces and handed out. A local journalist described the scenes as "unimaginable... wild with joy".

The movement began at the Tirana University, where students had been boycotting classes and 700 students and academic staff went on a hunger strike demanding that the name of the university—the Enver Hoxha University—be changed.

At first the regime refused to budge. But support demonstrations began and the newly-legalised trade union federation called for a strike.

Stratified by the breadth of the movement, the authorities quickly backed down and agreed to change the name of the university and President

Alia announced he would form a new government, possibly bringing in opposition leaders.

The hated Enver Hoxha ruled Albania from 1945 to his death in 1985. An elaborate personality cult was built around him in the same style as Stalin in Russia. Anyone who dared utter anything against the regime put their life at serious risk. Of the 40 central committee members of the Albanian Communist Party in 1945 only one died a natural death. And that was Enver Hoxha.

Like Stalin in Russia, Hoxha claimed that Albania was a socialist paradise. Nothing could be further from the truth. Albania, like the rest of Eastern Europe, attempted to industrialize and catch up with the advanced countries, with a state capitalist strategy.

All of its industry and resources were nationalised and put under the control of a privileged state bureaucracy. Workers' rights were crushed and the country was closed off from the rest of the world.

Where this strategy had been a success for Stalin in the 1930s, in Albania it was an absolute failure. Today Albania has the lowest living standards in all of Europe

and a massive secret police apparatus.

With repression failing to keep the lid on things, the regime has more recently attempted to recruit the newly legalised opposition, the Democratic Party, to moderate the street demonstrations for them.

Strong rumours have circulated that the democratic reforms are under threat from a military crackdown if the disturbances don't stop.

The Democratic Party, whose most senior members are made up of dissident middle class intellectuals and ex-Communist Party members, has taken the bait.

In December last year, Professor Gramoz of Tirana University, an executive member of the Democratic Party, called the demonstrators "hooligans" and "dark forces" and said they will "go too far".

Nevertheless, the pent-up bitterness from decades of repression has continued to explode onto the streets. Workers and students are gaining confidence to organise continuing struggle. The solution for Albania—and for the rest of Eastern Europe—is for the workers to take over and run the country and its factories for their own needs.

In other words to struggle for a "socialism" that they control. —by Mark Gillespie

## Issues in the movement

# Should we condemn Iraq?

A RECENT meeting of the Brisbane Gulf Action Coalition voted to add a preamble to our demands which condemns Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Organisations such as Rainbow Alliance, People for Nuclear Disarmament and the Democratic Socialist Party argued that this was necessary because there were many organisations and individuals who weren't being drawn into the anti-war campaign—all because the coalition doesn't make it clear that we are opposed to Saddam Hussein's annexation of Kuwait.

But far from broadening the campaign, the preamble actually does the opposite.

It makes it harder for people who are uncertain about the war to be convinced that they should oppose it. All the time, Bush and Hawke are telling us that the reason that is to liberate Kuwait, to take a stand against the aggression of a dictator.

Well, now this is a lie. The US backed Saddam Hussein for years, and never gave a damn about the tyranny under which most Kuwaitis lived. And

despite the media's hysteria, Saddam Hussein is no worse than the numerous other dictators and butchers supported by the United States.

The war is about oil, and reasserting the right of the United States to militarily intervene where they see fit.

If anything, events since the start of the war have made this clearer. The devastation being wrought in Baghdad and Kuwait, the loss of thousands of civilian lives and the US's determination to push ahead with the ground war regardless, show that the real reason for the war is to beat Iraq into complete submission.

The anti-war coalition has to educate people about the real reasons for the slaughter in the Gulf—and not concede to pro-war arguments that Saddam Hussein is responsible.

The move to add the preamble by groups in the campaign is clearly an attempt to shift the politics of the anti-war

movement to the right—to make the platform more pacifist rather than clearly anti-imperialist. They want the campaign to appear more respectable and even-handed.

By doing so, they aren't responding to the needs of the campaign or to the concerns of people newly radicalised by their horror at the US invasion. They are capitulating to criticisms from the hypocrites of the pro-war camp.

—by Alison Stewart

## Is a ceasefire enough?

AS THE US began bombing Iraq, the demand for a "ceasefire" emerged in the anti-war movement.

On the surface, demanding that the US stop the bombing can tap into the anger of people who genuinely want to see an end to the bloodshed.

The problem with the demand for a ceasefire is that it doesn't challenge the presence of US troops in the Gulf. Any settlement that take place while the US remains will be on the US's terms under the shadow of 750,000 Allied troops.

And, while there doesn't seem to be a contradiction between a ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of US and Allied troops from the Gulf to many of the people who come along to the rallies and marches, inside the campaign the two are clearly composites.

Inferred in the call for a ceasefire by groups like People for Nuclear Disarmament and the New Left Party is that both sides are to blame. It shifts the emphasis of the campaign away from the role of US imperialism towards a negotiated settlement in which the US and Israel have a right to participate, and sanctions against Iraq.

This can only direct the anger of people who are against the war away from its real causes.

—by Judy McVey



# The Arab revolt

AS the US invades Iraq, its western allies are haunted by the anger the war has unleashed in the Arab world.

Their fear is our hope. This mass anger over the US invasion has itself built on a wave of popular struggle over the last three years—movements in support of the Pales-

tinian *intifada*, as well as over wages and democratic rights.

The class struggle has become linked up with the national struggle, as millions of poor and working class Arabs have fought for both higher wages and an end to Zionist and imperialist domination.

**T**HE MOST committed opposition to the US-led invasion has been in Jordan, where over half the population is Palestinian.

There are daily demonstrations and tens of thousands have signed up to fight with Saddam.

Their support springs from despair. Nearly 30 years of armed struggle, diplomacy and betrayal by Arab and Western leaders, followed by three years of the *intifada*, have left them no nearer their goal—a Palestinian state.

Saddam's military confrontation with the mighty US and Israel has given them hope; for that they are willing to support him.

Their feelings were summed up by an elderly woman at the al-Bakaa refugee camp outside Amman:

For 40 years the Zionists have knocked down our houses, now they know what it feels like. Our stones have been replaced by missiles, and our tears of sadness have become tears of joy.

King Hussein, traditionally a loyal ally of the US, is in trouble.

A wave of strikes, protests and riots inspired by the *intifada* forced him to end martial law, lift the ban on community literature, and concede parliamentary elections.

That parliament, now dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, demanded that all Arab resources and armies be handed over to Saddam.

And democratic reforms have given workers the confidence to wage successful strikes over wages in defiance of the labour laws.

Radical Palestinian organisations have returned in force to Jordan for the first time since the Black September massacre of 1970.

**T**HIS SHIFT has been general throughout the Arab and Muslim world.

In Algeria, on 18 January, more than 400,000 people flocked onto the streets.

President Chadli Benjedid has been battling to keep control of Algeria since the 1988 food riots. His strategy was "liberalisation" of the economy and setting up joint ventures with Western companies.

The result has been a collapsing economy and a growing hostility to the West.

In neighbouring Tunisia, tens of thousands have marched shouting anti-French and pro-Saddam slogans.

Over 280 committees have been set up to support Iraq, and thousands have volunteered to go to the front on the Iraqi side.

In Karachi in Pakistan, thousands set fire to banks and government vehicles and built barricades of burning tyres. In Peshawar, over 2000 rioted and 100,000 men are reported to have signed up as volunteers to fight against the US-led alliance.

In Bangladesh, the Ershad government was brought down by a series of general strikes against the war, austerity and government repression.

When the new government banned

demonstrations, 500 people who had volunteered to join Saddam's forces marched through Dacca, brandishing wooden rifles.

Thousands of protesters in Sudan burned the Egyptian flag and called for the bombing of the Aswan dam for the betrayal by Mubarak of the pan-Arab cause.

**I**N EGYPT, the most important of Bush's Arab allies, Hosni Mubarak is coming under serious pressure.

The *Mideast Mirror* reports that "pro-Iraqi sentiment among ordinary Egyptians is increasing with every US bomb dropped on Iraq."

It points to "a class distinction with the Egyptian public on this matter." They quote trade unionist Yehia Hussein, a worker in Helwan, as saying that in his factory, "all the workers are Saddamists and all the managers are Kuwaitists."

This turnaround is remarkable considering the ill-treatment of thousands of poorly paid Egyptian workers in Iraq and their resulting hatred of Saddam.

The same dynamic unfolded when the *intifada* first erupted.

During a strike in the northern city of Mehalia al-Kubra by workers from a giant textile mill—the largest workplace in the Middle East—the workers fought riot police after a small solidarity march.

Slogans against Israeli repression of the Palestinians soon became demands for Egypt to break links with Israel.

They very quickly became slogans against the IMF and the US. The government was declared a servant of the West and there were calls to bring down President Mubarak.

The movement in solidarity with the *intifada* conducted a running battle with the government. Phil Marshall, author of a book on the *intifada*, commented:

Egypt showed what every Arab regime feared—that the Palestine question was among the most subversive in the Middle East.

It showed how quickly domestic economic grievances could be linked to a general anti-imperialist sentiment, bringing struggles around economic demands into and re-inforcing Arab nationalist demands and vice versa.

And its most potent weapon has not been the parliamentary speech or even the AK-47, but the general strike.

The Arab revolt is a striking confirmation of Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, one of the great advances in Marxism this century.

At its heart, Trotsky's theory was an explanation of the potential of the working class in the non-industrialised and colonial world.

Marxists, including Marx himself, had traditionally thought that the revolution would begin in the most

towns.

Unlike elsewhere in the region, the Islamic fundamentalists have been marginalised in Morocco by the strength of the social democratic and trade union organisations.

Very few slogans are pro-Saddam or use the language of Islam.

The Gulf crisis could not have come at a worse time for King Hassan.

Economic growth has been falling since the mid-seventies and the national debt is \$22 billion. Unemployment has reached 30% and begging become widespread.

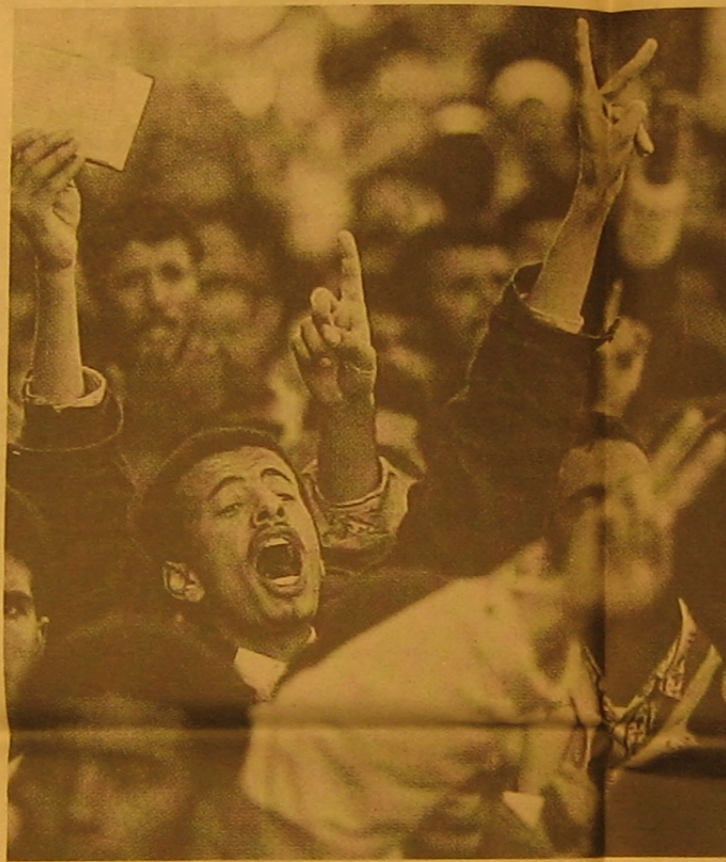
But there is also a long tradition of resistance. In 1981 price rises were met by strikes; in 1984 the protests were led by students.

During 1989, there were strikes in the oil refineries, flour mills and transport depots.

Last December, a general strike over wages and prices led to widespread rioting, particularly Rabat and Tangiers, during which at least 50 people were shot dead.

Both the Palestinian *intifada* and the king's pro-Western stance have intersected with—and intensified—this rising class struggle.

As King Hussein of Jordan gloomily forecast: "The Arab world may be headed for a period of turbulence like never before."



LEFT: Part of a huge rally in Morocco in early February against the US invasion. ABOVE: A similar rally in Amman, Jordan.

## Linking class and national struggle

**THE GROWING** revolt in the Arab and Muslim world is the real alternative to George Bush's barbaric war against the people of Iraq.

It is a revolt aimed at both local bosses and tyrants as well as at the US and its watchdog, Israel.

It is not a revolt of all Arabs, but overwhelmingly of the working class and the poor. Its victories have included higher wages (which do not benefit Arab bosses), the scrapping of price rises and democratic rights and it has kept a number of pro-Western regimes out of George Bush's Coalition against Iraq.

Already it has overturned one regime and more will undoubtedly follow.

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Marxists, including Marx himself, had traditionally thought that the revolution would begin in the most

industrialised countries with the most advanced working class movements—countries like Britain and later Germany.

Trotsky pointed out that economic and social development in the colonial world was extremely uneven.

Whilst imperialism reduced the mass of small farmers and artisans to misery, it also built modern industries in the cities, which themselves became centres of working class organisation and activity.

This is precisely what happened in the years after the Russian revolution, as old regimes collapsed across a Europe convulsed with uprisings.

And in 1974, Portugal's military defeat in its colonies—Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and East Timor—led to a military rebellion at home against the Portuguese regime and one of the great working class revolts since the Second World War.

Socialism was very much on the agenda in the northern summer of 1975.

The difference between Portugal, where the revolution was beaten back, and Russia where the revolution was won, was the role played by the Bolshevik Party—a mass organisation of committed revolutionary socialists rooted in the workplaces.

In the Middle East, all the elements of Trotsky's theory were illustrated as early as 1919.

In Egypt in that year, a

nationalist movement swept the country similar to those in India, China, Ireland and Turkey.

From 8 March when students demonstrated in Cairo, there were daily protests, strikes and demonstrations. There were bloody clashes with the British military. Railways were cut and the tramways shut down.

A popular activity was overturning trams and burning them.

In the midst of this popular revolution, the *Wafd*, the bourgeois nationalist party, publicly denounced all forms of violence.

In spite of their spineless stand, the *Wafd* leaders gained their freedom from jail on the backs of the "violent" masses. They were allowed to travel to Europe.

No sooner than the tramways workers had returned to work with an eight hour day and a pay rise than the government was brought down on 21 April by a political strike of government employees.

They were joined by striking print, postal, customs and port workers, government workshops, workers in the Cairo electric company and taxis. Workers at the Hawamdiyya sugar refinery and modern industrial complexes exist side by side with mass

poverty and much backwardness.

But it is not the case they remain agricultural backwaters. By the early eighties Algeria and Egypt had 44% of the population living in urban areas. In Iraq it was 72%, Lebanon 77%, Jordan 57%, Syria 49% and Tunisia 53%.

Egypt had 30% of the workforce in industry with comparable numbers in most other Arab countries.

Today all the contradictions of imperialism in the Middle East have been massively heightened by the war.

Israel openly plans the mass deportation of Palestinians and the US, its ally, approves by announcing it will no longer deal with the PLO.

The al-Sabaha announce that there will be no democracy when Kuwait is "liberated". Instead there will be a "purge" of potentially disruptive elements—no doubt the 400,000 Palestinians who did much of the work to make them rich.

This barbarism will not be quietly accepted in the rest of the Arab world.

Years of IMF-dictated austerity have created both anger and rebellion and discredited a series of pro-Western regimes.

Those in the anti-war

movement who talk about "Peace Conferences" and "negotiated settlements" give credibility to frantic attempts by the US—and its local and Western allies—to regain control over their populations if and when they defeat Iraq.

Rather than call for "conferences" that will attempt to entrench their rule, we should be doing everything possible to link up with the real and immediate revolt in the region.

That means an uncompromising struggle against our own ruling class and its allies. It means demanding the US and Australia stop the war, that they get out of the Gulf now.

It means building revolutionary organisation both here and in the Arab world—organisations that need to be rooted in the class politics of Marxism if the upsurge both here and in the Middle East is to fulfil its potential.

If we can help the Arab people inflict a defeat on imperialism, we will have really taken the first step to solving the problems both of their region and ours—the problems of imperialism, capitalism and oppression.

We will have taken a major step towards socialism.

For these people the ideal is Sweden, a country whose welfare state is made

each according to their needs."

Marx saw socialism most importantly as a society in which the new productive capacity unleashed by the industrial revolution would be used, not to pile up profits for the benefit of a few in a never-ending competition between capitalists, but to provide first for the needs and wants of ordinary people.

Only then would it be possible to create a society in which the full potential of the human race could be achieved.

For Marx, the vast abundance of modern industrial society could be harnessed to end poverty.

So that we can see today that the obscene waste of money spent on nuclear weapons, both in the "capitalist" west and the "socialist" east could instead be directed towards food, shelter, education and the other needs of ordinary people.

We only need to look at the present, billion dollar a day war, the de-salination plant built in a few weeks to cater for 1/2 a million troops, the "smart bombs" etc, to recognise the potential that is being squandered.

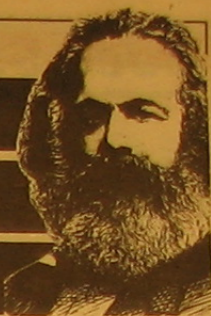
The market is the cause of this waste. In a world of potential abundance, we no more need a marketplace for food (or even video recorders) than we do for the air we need to breathe.

But centralised planning will not eliminate the obscene priorities of capitalism if it is not based on mass democracy at the point of production.

That was Karl Marx's vision of socialism. It is not "dead"; it is yet to be tested.

And from the Sudan to the Gulf, from the queues of Leningrad to the slums of New York, we see the "free enterprise" alternative. Take your pick.

The real Marxist tradition



**S**INCE the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, socialists have faced an urgent task—the rescuing of the name of socialism from both its enemies and some of its self-styled "supporters".

To Liberal Party politicians and the right-wing columnists for *The Australian*, it means "big government" and "excessive taxes".

Socialism is also blamed for the horrors of the Ceausescu's Romania and Pol Pot's Kampuchea, societies where censorship, a one-party state, prison camps and even genocide are to be found.

This is the argument of the enemies of socialism.

But many socialists themselves believed that socialism was a system in which centralised planning eliminated the economic crises of capitalism and led to increasing abundance.

As the American revolutionary socialist, Hal Draper, mockingly described it: "Gasometers producing culture for the masses".

Now that the centralised economies are in crisis themselves they have abandoned even this as their central definition of socialism.

Now the likes of Gorbachev argue that the capitalist market—the same market which leaves food to rot while millions are starving and for which the war in the Gulf is being fought—is allright after all.

Their new catchcry is "market socialism" in which once again equality and workers' power are missing, where there is private ownership of the means of production and the only "freedom" is the dubious "freedom" of the "free" market.

The only "socialism" in all of this is perhaps a commitment to a welfare state, or the word "socialism" somewhere in the title of the ruling party.

For these people the ideal is Sweden, a country whose welfare state is made

## What is socialism?

affordable by the enlightened "socialist" practice of specialising in arms manufacture.

To the people who first coined the term socialism early last century, these modern interpretations of its meaning would appear very odd indeed.

For most of these early socialists, socialism was, before anything else, a society of freedom and equality. Most wanted at least the factories and the land to be owned in common. Many saw state ownership as a means to this end, not an end in itself.

And almost all were driven by revulsion at the insanity of the capitalist market—the way in which production was directed, not towards the fulfillment of human needs, but towards the endless pursuit of profit.

The idea of a "market socialism" would have seemed to them a contradiction in terms. And they would have been right.

So that we can see today that the obscene waste of money spent on nuclear weapons, both in the "capitalist" west and the "socialist" east could instead be directed towards food, shelter, education and the other needs of ordinary people.

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—by Robert Bolland



## Does Stalinism discredit socialists?

**T**HE DEEPENING crisis in the Soviet Union poses point blank a series of important questions for socialists.

Gorbachev's program of glasnost and perestroika was originally hailed by many on the left as a means of revitalising "socialism" in Russia after long years of Stalinist tyranny and Brezhnevite conservatism.

With the overthrow of the Eastern European Stalinist regimes, the disintegration of the Russian economy, Gorbachev's backing for US imperialism in the Gulf war, and his brutal crack down on the independence movements in the Baltic states and Georgia, and on the rising democratic movement in Russia itself, these illusions are beginning to be shattered.

There was however, always a current on the left, of which the International Socialist Organisation is part, which pointed out that Gorbachev was a child of the Stalinist bureaucracy and in no way represented the interests of the mass of the Russian people. His reform measures were simply an attempt by the ruling bureaucracy to modernise the economy to allow Russian state capitalism to compete more effectively on the world market with western capitalism.

The reality is that Russia has nothing whatsoever to do with socialism. Russian workers are exploited and oppressed, just like workers in the West, and have to fight against their own rulers to defend their interests.

Revolutionary Marxists, rather than relying on Gorbachev to transform Russian society, draw inspiration from the rising working class revolutionary movements in the West. The highpoint of this so far was the nationwide miners' strike of 1989.



LEFT: Soviet women are forced to spend hours queuing for basic necessities of dreadful quality. This is not socialism.

seemed to work. Russia emerged from the Second World War with an empire that covered half of Europe. It was now the second greatest world power after the United States. Indeed what is often forgotten today with all the talk of the inherent inefficiency of stultified economies compared to "market capitalism" is that the Russian economy and the military establishment it fueled grew rapidly in the 1940s and 1950s, outpacing the US.

### BUT FROM the late 1960s Russian growth rates began to decline.

The pressure of a less developed economy carrying an arms burden rivaling that of the much larger US economy began to tell.

The Brezhnev years were a long period of stagnation. By the early 1980s sections of the ruling bureaucracy realised something drastic had to be done to break out of the malaise.

Gorbachev was brought to power to break the inertia. Initially he introduced no great reforms but simply attempted to galvanise the state apparatus to force up the rate of investment and growth.

When that failed he turned to *glasnost* and *perestroika* to shake up the bureaucracy. While his intention was simply to revamp the economy in the interests of the ruling bureaucracy, these measures did open up a certain space for mass popular mobilisation.

However after four years it is clear that *perestroika* has dismally failed. The Russian economy is contracting, not growing. There are enormous shortages. Gorbachev has lost all popular support.

In response the once nice, liberal, Mr Gorbachev has thrown off his mask and is resorting to classic Stalinist measures to hold together his fragmenting empire. The ruling class is moving to install a new right wing authoritarian regime, either headed by Gorbachev himself or if he fails to act decisively enough by someone who will.

But the triumph of the authoritarian Stalinist right is not inevitable. The ruling class remains divided and *perestroika* has unleashed an enormous movement from below which will fight to defend its interests.

This opens up enormous opportunities for the emergence of a new revolutionary left based on the real tradition of the 1917 revolution—a movement that looks to socialism from below: mass democracy and workers power.

As well the crisis in Russia and the overthrow of Stalinism in Eastern Europe opens up space for the re-birth of revolutionary Marxism in the West. Stalinism, the dominant force on the western left for over 50 years, has collapsed, but socialism is not dead.

Only a year ago the so-called triumph of the market was hailed as ushering in a new era of peace and prosperity. The murderous US war in the Gulf and the deepening recession has demolished this myth on both counts.

Capitalism has not shed its spits. It is just as brutal and oppressive a system as ever. A vibrant socialist movement is vital if we are to combat Bush's "New World Order".

The collapse of Stalinism combined with the growth of a world wide anti-war movement opens up enormous possibilities for just such a development. Our task is to seize the moment.

—by Mick Armstrong

## The myth of Russian 'socialism'

### CONTROVERSY over the Russian question is not new on the left.

For over sixty years it has been the central issue dividing the socialist movement essentially into two camps—Stalinists and reformists together on the one side, revolutionary Marxists on the other.

It was never a sectarian point scoring division but went right to the heart of the meaning of socialism itself. Is socialism about a dull grey authoritarian dictatorship regimenting the lives of ordinary working people or is it about genuine human liberation—the democratic control of society by the mass of workers?

The Bolshevik-led Russian revolution of 1917 was the most momentous event in human history. For the first time the working class took power into their own hands and successfully defended their revolution from imperialist invasion.

The revolution inspired millions of workers around the world to fight for their own liberation. Unfortunately, however, while there were revolutions in numerous other countries they were defeated.

Outside Russia mass democratic revolutionary parties like the Bolsheviks had not been constructed before the onset of revolt. This allowed the traditional reformist parties of Western Europe to hold the movement in check.

The revolution was left isolated in poor and backward Russia. This laid the basis for a successful counter-revolution. The Russian working class under the impact of civil war, mass starvation, disease and imperialist blockade was ground down and demoralised.

The soviets—the democratic organs the workers established to administer society—became increasingly bureaucratised. The

Bolshevik Party which had led the revolution now began to substitute for the rule of the workers.

The Bolsheviks had been a mass party of millions of the most militant and class conscious workers. Under Lenin's leadership it had been a highly democratic party totally the opposite of the monster that Stalin was to eventually fashion.

### HOWEVER as the revolution was rolled back and working class confidence undermined, the Bolshevik party itself became increasingly bureaucratised.

It then began to fracture. On one side there were those, headed by Leon Trotsky, who remained loyal to their original vision of human emancipation and championed working class interests against the growing privileges and authoritarianism of the state bureaucracy. While on the other side the increasingly arrogant bureaucrats grouped around Stalin attempted to assert their control.

The demoralisation and defeats suffered by militant workers meant that Trotsky's Left Opposition was on the defensive, though as late as 1926/27 broad layers of workers and Communist party members rallied behind the banner of the Left Opposition for a final heroic stand.

They were brutally crushed by police repression. The first Five Year Plan of 1928 eliminated the last gains of the revolution. Millions of peasants were massacred, workers lost all control over their workplaces, wages were halved and tens of thousands of militants were purged.

Trotsky was exiled and throughout the 1930s, Stalin's murder machine rooted out all signs of

opposition within the Communist Party. Virtually all the leaders of the 1917 revolution were executed. Trotsky himself was murdered by a Stalinist assassin in Mexico in 1940.

Outside Russia most people on the left, including a whole generation of militant western workers, backed Stalin. He successfully claimed the mantle of the October revolution.

Trotsky and his supporters were portrayed by the Communist parties as a band of fascist wreckers in league with western imperialism to strangle the workers' homeland. Unfortunately many workers believed these crude lies.

When reports did begin to surface about the terrible repression in Russia they were dismissed as the slanders of a hostile western press out to discredit the workers' paradise.

### IT WAS NOT until Russian tanks crushed the 1956 Hungarian revolution that the illusions of a whole generation of socialists began to be shattered.

The western Communist parties began to lose their hegemony over the most militant sections of the working class.

This trend was reinforced by the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the rise of Solidarity in Poland and revolts in other parts of the Russian empire. A space now opened up for revolutionary Marxists in the Trotskyist tradition to begin to obtain a hearing.

However even though from the late 1960s most of the left no longer uncritically backed Russia, by and large they still considered that it was some sort of workers' state, though badly in need of democratic reform.

Many felt Gorbachev would be able to do the job. This fitted into a reformist view of social change—that what mattered was not the mass action of millions of workers from below but the actions from on high by a few well meaning leaders.

This approach totally misunderstood the nature of Russian society. The final vestiges of workers' control had been smashed by the Stalinist counter-revolution as far back as 1929.

### WITH THE first Five Year Plan the state bureaucracy, in response to deepening economic crisis and the threat of foreign invasion, moved decisively to stamp their will on Russian society.

Massive resources were thrown into forced industrialisation and the development of a modern armaments industry to compete militarily with the West.

Given the extreme backwardness of the Russian economy this forced march towards a modern capitalist society could only be achieved by the state galvanising all the nation's resources via incredible repression. The peasantry as a class were eliminated, the working class movement was atomised and up to ten million were forced to work as slave labourers.

This tremendous repression was not simply the product of Stalin's demoted mind but the logic of a late developing capitalist power trying to catch up with its more developed rivals. Everything was subordinated to the drive to accumulate more and more capital to compete with the West.

Despite all the horrors from the bureaucracy's point of view it

## Our History

### 1944 printers' strike

THE SECOND World War is often seen as a period when the ruling class and the working class of Australia, put aside their differences to unite against fascism.

This is a myth. Class struggle continued throughout the war, at high levels. Strike days rose from 459,194 worker/days in 1939, to 1,507,252 in 1940; there was a severe decline during 1942, but then they rose again to over two million in 1945.

Coalminers never really gave up striking, even during 1942. A major strike in 1940, lasting two weeks, won them the 40-hour week and two weeks annual leave.

Many of the disputes involved new workers, particularly women who were drawn into the workforce to replace those on military service.

The strikes were never explicitly against the war. However enormous political pressure was brought to bear on them for betraying "Our boys" at the front.

The strikers won the sympathy of the wider public. Newspaper bosses were hated because of their well known anti-Laborism.

The 40-hour week was also a popular demand. Shorter hours should mean more jobs. Many workers learned rising unemployment when the soldiers returned home.

The demand also reflected the expectations of workers for a better "New World Order" after the sacrifices of the Depression and the war.

Solidarity action won the strike. In the words of an article in the AJA's newspaper, "We knew we had the bosses wet, that in our hands was the most potent weapon a trade union ever wielded."

The Sun workers' decision to walk out was against wartime public opinion. But when newspaper bosses tried to put out a scab paper, public opinion swung round behind the strikers.

Even when workers are swamped in patriotic rhetoric strikes can still break out. And even though union officials seldom want a militant fight, they can be forced into line by a determined rank and file.

The strikes of 1944 were a prelude to the mass outbreak of working class action in the post-war years. During the three years, 1945-7, nearly five and a half million working days were lost to the bosses in strike activity.

This was the only way to end wartime wage-pegging and win the "rewards" that workers had been promised for their immense sacrifices.

—by Judy McVey



drive his tram when a Herald scab was on board. The scab was later seen following the tram on foot.

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Solidarity action won the strike. In the words of an article in the AJA's newspaper, "We knew we had the bosses wet, that in our hands was the most potent weapon a trade union ever wielded."

The Sun workers' decision to walk out was against wartime public opinion. But when newspaper bosses tried to put out a scab paper, public opinion swung round behind the strikers.

Even when workers are swamped in patriotic rhetoric strikes can still break out. And even though union officials seldom want a militant fight, they can be forced into line by a determined rank and file.

The strikes of 1944 were a prelude to the mass outbreak of working class action in the post-war years. During the three years, 1945-7, nearly five and a half million working days were lost to the bosses in strike activity.

This was the only way to end wartime wage-pegging and win the "rewards" that workers had been promised for their immense sacrifices.

—by Judy McVey

## REVIEWS

# Is a macho man the answer?

GREEN CARD looks like being the big box office hit of 1991. Starring Gerard Depardieu and Andie MacDowell, written and directed by Peter Weir (*Dead Poets Society*), it's got all the ingredients for success.

The film is basically a love story. Bronte and George enter a marriage of convenience—she to get the apartment she wants, he to get American citizenship and the prized green card that goes with it. This mismatched pair, forced together through circumstance, drive each other to distraction, but end up falling in love.

It's easy to see why people find *Green Card* enjoyable. Depardieu's character is meant to be engaging and lovable, it punctures middle class pretentiousness, there are some very funny moments.

But it also has a reactionary side to it. Bronte is thirty-one and has established a single lifestyle that she is happy with. She has a job she loves, she has a boyfriend who shares her concerns about the environment and child poverty.

### LAIR

George is a bit of a lair, uninterested in politics. In the time he and Bronte are forced to share her apartment to placate the immigration authorities, he mocks Bronte and her values, he destroys her relationship with her boyfriend as well as her treasured greenhouse garden.

And here's the rub—instead of hating him for this, Bronte falls in love with him. She discovers what's been missing in her life—a macho man.

When George ridicules her lifestyle and politics, Bronte is incapable of defending herself. She is written as a rather unsympathetic character, passionless and severe. You'd think she'd be able to stand up to a shiftless type who needs her to avoid being deported.

Peter Weir chose an easy target. Bronte is very middle class, a wishy-washy liberal, and her boyfriend is a boring nerd. The result is to undermine the



GEORGE and Bronte—does he really know her better than she knows herself?

idea of a woman deciding to be single and in control of her life. Instead, the ideal is for men and women to become immersed in each other to the exclusion of everything else, where the only thing that matters is LOVE.

This kind of relationship meets the approval of virtually all the characters in the movie. There is no sense at all that there might be an alternative to it.

### FUN

As a sidelight, *Green Card* pokes fun at one of the board of directors of the apartment block—she's elderly, female, and short in stature. Weir created her as a narrow-minded busybody, and plays her for laughs.

You can see that the struggle against women's oppression is far from over when a movie like *Green Card* can be number one without a murmur about its politics.

The film contains one note of realism—despite all the effort to make the marriage look genuine, George is still deported.

—by Peter May

### Arguments for revolutionary socialism

If you are new to socialist ideas, a recent book by John Molyneux, *Arguments for Revolutionary Socialism*, is for you.

This book answers questions which people commonly ask on meeting the ISO. It is therefore written in a way which is easy to understand and useful for everyday discussion.

For example one article goes over the question of human nature. Does it exist? Is it inherently selfish? Does it make socialism impossible? After showing how the idea of a "natural" order of things has always justified the order of the slave-owners, kings and capitalists, Molyneux argues:

To the American Indian, private ownership of land was "unnatural". To the 18th Century landowner it was the highest form of love. To the Victorian Englishman it was the lowest... Change the social conditions and you change "human nature".

So if you need to brush up on the arguments, or want to read more about where the ISO stand on everything from non-violence to immigration controls, get this book.

—by Dwayne Schultz

Available from Bookmarks and all ISO branches for \$5.00

## Gorky's novels of revolution

IF YOU are inspired by the mass popular revolts shaking the foundations of the Russian Empire, now is a good time to read the novels of the Russian revolutionary Maxim Gorky.

*Mother* is the story of a young activist in the revolutionary underground, Pavel Vlassov.

Anyone with sympathies for the socialist movement will enjoy the way Pavel's mother, Nilovna, changes from a peasant woman terrified of her son's politics into an active member of a revolutionary circle.

When she first suggests to someone in the circle that she could work in the town while her son is in prison, he assumes she means housework.

"She gave a sigh, hurt that he had not understood."

But once they understand, she undertakes dangerous work contacting peasant revolutionaries and living amongst them in the town.

You cannot help but smile when a peasant Nilovna is visiting suddenly turns on Sophia, her companion. He is suspicious because she is from the upper classes.

"...Think you can hide the sins of the gentleman under that peasant kerchief on your head?"

Nilovna defends her as her friend and a revolutionary. Rybin discovers Sophia has spent time in jail and is a little sheepish.

"Don't mind me," he grinned, picking up one of the bundles of books.

revolves around the life of Yevsey Klimkov who is coerced into spying for the Czarist police. He is a miserable, depressing character because he is so cowardly and timid. But he is also a source of optimism.

When he comes in contact with some young people who defy the oppression and horrors of Czarist society, he responds.

### FERMENT

The spies who surround Yevsey are a despicable lot. But even they are touched by the revolutionary ferment of 1905. Klimkov asks one of the spies to explain a "constitution".

"A different order of life," answered the spy quietly.

"Then came the fantastic, and I'll live quietly by myself."

"As soon as what settles down?"

"I mean the whole new order of things. When the people really take over for themselves."

In every revolution, writers describe scenes such as these.

However, the revolution is defeated and Klimkov suffers a crisis in his life. Gorky goes on to describe the depressing consequences of a failed revolution.

But his work is a testimony to the revolutionary movement of Russia in the early years of this century. It is also a timely reminder of the power the working class has to change, not just the economic order, but even the personal lives of working people too.

—by Sandra Bloodworth



## CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE 'LUCKY' COUNTRY...

# BATTLING BUSH IN THE WORKPLACE

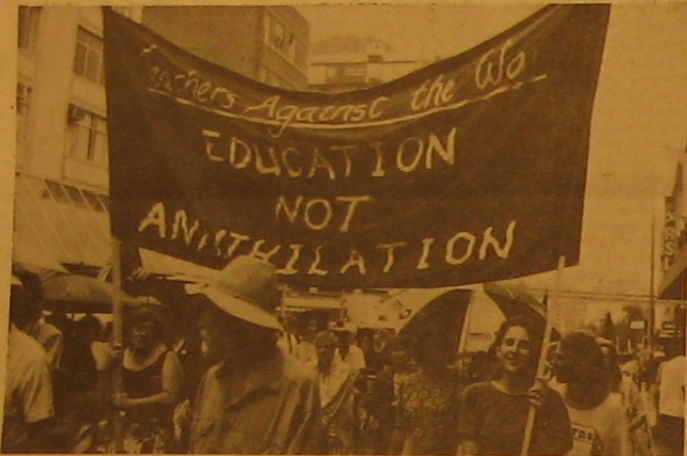
THE STRUGGLE to stop the Gulf war is being taken into Australia's workplaces and unions. Public servants, building workers, tammies, journalists and teachers are among the many who are involved. Workplace groups are not necessarily grand affairs. Five people attended the first meeting of a group at Flemington Secondary College in Melbourne. But as Lyne O'Neill, who started the group, says:

There were two really positive sides to the meeting. Firstly, the high level of political discussion about what the war is really about and the role of the UN, and what sort of slogans they should have on their placards. Secondly how everyone had really good ideas about what to do and was prepared to take on jobs.

Nine workers at Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens came to hear Hannah Middleton from the Bring the Frigates Home Coalition at a forum organised by their workplace group. Mike Waterman described how "People raised pro-war arguments that they had heard so that they could find ways of being able to answer back." Afterwards they decided to have another meeting to hear an Arab speaker.

Like many other groups, the Botanic Gardens group advertised an upcoming demonstration on their leaflet. The big demonstrations can provide an organising focus for the smaller groups, and link them in to the wider movement.

Librarians Against the Gulf War at the State Library of Victoria are organising a contingent for a rally, as well as putting out their own badge. They have been getting about 40 people to their meetings. Some workers are particularly



affected by specific issues associated with the war.

One of the main concerns of the anti-war group at Brunswick Tram Depot has been the increase in racism, especially at the depot and the local community who have many Arab and Muslim workers.

At Murdoch's Herald and Weekly Times in Melbourne, five journalists have formed a "Journalists Against War and Censorship" group. They have put out a leaflet, which points out how news from the Middle East is censored and manipulated, and how the Herald-Sun reacted to the Baghdad air-raid shelter bombing by pushing the US line that Saddam had cynically moved civilians to a military target shortly beforehand.

As might be expected, management has not always welcomed the formation of these groups. Department of Veterans Affairs bosses in Melbourne issued a bulletin banning the wearing of anti-war badges or putting leaflets or posters on departmental property, but a group still met a few days later. Socialists emphasise the

crucial importance of this grassroots activity among workers in individual workplaces. But the anti-war positions adopted officially by the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWUI), and the National Executive of the Public Sector Union, make it easier for workplace activists to get a hearing for their arguments.

More pressure needs to be applied to union officials. Canberra PSU member Patricia Langenakker says that, despite the National Executive's position, there is a great reluctance in the PSU in Canberra to take an anti-war stance for fear of upsetting pro-war members. The Union should try to lead its members on the issue, or at least provide opportunities, such as members' meetings and regular journals, which enable the issues to be debated.

Groups of rank and file activists have also been set up across workplaces, and can play a role. Workers Against War in Melbourne meets at Trades Hall and has 40 to 60 unionists attending its meetings. Industrial action played a major part in helping and the



**CHEAP SHOTS**

**Laissez-faire Libs**

WAS Upper House Liberal

Commission. But such distaste for corporate regulation should not really surprise us. In the early 1980s, nearly half the WA Liberal Party's finance committee were named directors of companies sunk at the bottom of the harbour with unrecoverable tax liabilities.

**Multi-function polities** ROSS Smith, Victorian Liberal front-bencher, has found that of the 64 Victorian Labor MPs, 23 used to be union officials, party organisers or ministerial advisers. Thirteen taught, 11 "claimed allegiance to the retail trade". Four were lawyers. One owned a business. There weren't any accountants or managers.

This, according to Ross, explains why Victoria is in such a mess. "The management of our economy has therefore been left in the hands of theorists and visionaries with little or no practical experience of management or busi-

## Journalists fight bosses' censorship at Fairfax, ABC

THREE hundred and fifty journalists at the Fairfax Group in Sydney went on strike for four days on 14 February. Members of the Australian Journalists Association at The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian Financial Review and Sun-Herald voted to stop work and conduct a campaign of rolling stoppages after the company's appointed receiver, Deloitte, refused to endorse a charter of editorial independence.

AJA members set up a picket line outside the Fairfax Building at Ultimo. The charter was drawn up by journalists after James Grant, a co-receiver and chairperson of Deloitte, interfered in the reporting of a Herald story on 7 February dealing with a claim against Deloitte by AWA over alleged negligence.

At their first stop-work meeting to discuss editorial interference, the Fairfax journalists passed a motion supporting the ABC journalists and their reporting of the Gulf War.

ABC journalists have also suffered editorial interference after the Hawke Government attacked the station's reports of the Gulf War and its use of academics Bob Springborg and Ahmed Shbol as Middle East experts.

Hawke's attacks have sent upper management on a McCarthyite witch-hunt to weed out any "bias" (alias anti-war sentiments) that journalists might harbour.

This witch-hunt failed to uncover any improper reporting, but it also failed to satisfy the government's demand for complete consensus on the war effort, with Kim Beazley calling for an "independent" inquisition into the ABC.

Nonetheless, it has made ABC journalists paranoid, effectively forcing them to produce the news the government wants to hear. Talk of journalists "professionalism", their supposed ability to see and therefore report the truth without bias, mystifies media practice. When journalists' ideas coincide with the news of the ruling class, their apparent professionalism is unquestioned.

But when journalists' ideas conflict with the interests of ruling class, be it Deloitte's, Murdoch's or the government's, it interferes with the way they work by imposing censorship. This is why we must support journalists in their struggle to report those items which expose the contradictions and hypocrisy of capitalism.

## 3000 march against Goss's attacks

3000 STATE public servants marched on Brisbane's Executive Building, home to the Premier's Department and the Public Service Management Commission (PSMC), on Monday 18 February. ABC journalists have also suffered editorial interference after the Hawke Government attacked the station's reports of the Gulf War and its use of academics Bob Springborg and Ahmed Shbol as Middle East experts.

Both the meeting and the march gave a richly deserved slap in the face to Premier Goss, who earlier claimed that only the union officials were upset and that the members weren't concerned at all. The

### SCOPE

They gave almost no scope for involving those unionists who really want to fight what is happening to them. It's good that people are angry, but the anger must be focussed. Otherwise, it will simply turn into a resentful acceptance. Writing letters to Members of Parliament, or moving motions in ALP branches, is no way to build this campaign. Yet this is exactly what the officials proposed despite earlier

rough-sounding talk about further mass meetings. The question is, where to now? The resolutions carried at the mass meeting were quite tame.

What we need are more meetings to discuss stoppages and, most importantly, a widening of the focus of the campaign. The fact that hundreds of positions have been made redundant in one department, and hundreds of more are due to go in another, was scarcely mentioned at the meeting. Yet this is exactly the sort of thing that most worries the ordinary unionist. Unless ordinary rank and file unionists can change the nature and focus of this campaign we run the risk of squandering a grand opportunity. After Monday's meeting and march, that would be criminal. —by Chris Parslow

## 'Over-population' is not the problem

### Socialist meetings & ISO branches

**MELBOURNE**  
Phone (03) 629 3148.  
Write to: GPO Box 1473N, Melbourne, 3001.

**CENTRAL BRANCH**  
Meets every Monday night, 7.30pm, at Bookmarks, 1st floor, 328 Flinders St, City.  
Mon 4 March: The relevance of Marxism today  
Mon 11 March: Marxism and women's liberation  
Marxism for beginners: informal discussion group every Sat, 2pm.

**NORTH BRANCH**  
Meets every Thursday night, 8.30pm at Meeting Room 4, LaTrobe Uni Union Building, Details 387 2053.  
Thurs 7 March: The relevance of Marxism today  
Thurs 14 March: Marxism and women's liberation

**SYDNEY**  
Phone (02) 261 4862.  
Write to: PO Box 4338, Sydney South, 2000.

**SOUTH BRANCH**  
Meets every Tuesday night, 7.00pm, at Bookmarks, 2nd floor, 89 Elizabeth St, City.  
Tues 5 March: South Africa - apartheid finished?  
Tues 12 March: Anti-war struggles - the socialist tradition

**BRISBANE**  
Phone (07) 229 8832  
Write to: PO Box 325, Woolloongabba, 4102.

**WEST BRANCH**  
Meets every Tuesday night, 7.00pm, at Bookmarks, 2nd floor, 89 Elizabeth St, City.  
Tues 5 March: Marxism and the New World Order  
Tues 12 March: Anti-war struggles - the socialist tradition

**CANBERRA**  
Write to: PO Box 17, Jamieson Centre, ACT 2614.  
Meets every Monday night, 7.00pm, Blair Room, Canberra Workers' Club, Chidlers St, Civic.

**HOBART**  
We hold regular Marxist study groups. Details: GPO Box 1898, Hobart 7001.

**PERTH**  
We hold regular Marxist study groups. Details: PO Box 521, Wanneroo 6065.

## Your reviews echo Stalinism



PO Box A338, Sydney South, NSW 2000

Please include a contact address and phone number so we can verify authorship and discuss any changes.

# Ideas of superiority are arrogant

CLASSICAL Marxism (or at least the ISO's version of it) has shown itself to be the best political ideology for understanding the war in the Gulf.

It gets the theoretical wobbles, however when applied to the environment, in particular animals, in the article by David Glanz (The Socialist #247) on "Humans are indeed the centre of nature", writes David, defending the anthropocentrism of orthodox Marxism. The hairless apes are superior to other animals, he argues, because only we have self-consciousness, language and culture.

However, even leaving aside the ability of our opposable-thumbed simian cousins to use tools and the communication skills of whales and other cetaceans, it does not follow that the size of our cerebellum morally entitles us to superb vivisection or laboratory tests (or duck-shooting, or intensive livestock farming) because they are "necessary for humanity" (quite untrue in fact). "If workers want to eat meat" that is the end of the issue, according to David. Such class reductionism (bordering on workism) has no ecological content. Are socialists to say nothing about the slaughtered animals' physical

WHEN Stalinism was applied to culture it became, in the Soviet Union, a means of censorship, and in the West a means of inducing leftist writers to publicise Soviet interests.

Given this definition, there cannot be any similarity between the approach to culture by Stalinism and by revolutionary Marxism. How is it possible, then, that the reviews

in *The Socialist* should be so familiar to anyone who has read the reviews in *The Guardian* of the 1940s and 50s?

Ron Tierney (*The Socialist* #247) would agree that there are similarities if he had a look at these old reviews. In fact he would be surprised to find many passages that almost repeat his formulation that we should "approach art as art" and then turn to the "political ideas" [it

embodies]. Stalinist inspired cultural theory never questioned the bourgeois myth that "Art" was a special realm. Because Carole Frier does question this notion she chooses her words carefully when she says that art cannot control the meanings produced from it. The "specialness" of art isn't internal to "Art" itself—neither is "artistic qualities" nor is "embodied ideas"—but in the activity of its audience and participants.

If Ron wants to privilege agitational art, so do I, which is why I am researching the Communist novelist Ralph de Boissiers. But I don't think such artists would thank him for suggesting that they "sacrifice" any of the skilled and difficult work of artistic production in order to make socialist art. This false dichotomy of Ron's between "real" and "political" art is another mott he'd find in old Stalinist reviews. —Allen Gardiner, Brisbane

for our industry, cars, food, cities, etc. Tough luck for the rare eagle. Tough luck, however for us too as our life-support systems disappear.

Nature must be made to fit human society, in David's view, and genetic engineering is acceptable. Apart from the philosophical implications of throwing reverence for life out the window, David does not mention the known and unknown ecological risks from release of transgenic organisms into the environment.

Human superiority and total environmental control are arrogant myths. Gaia, which also earns David's ire, has merit as a scientific hypothesis about the Earth as a self-regulating unitary system of inter-related life forms acting through physical (not mystical) homeostatic mechanisms to

maintain a constant environment. Gaia scientifically debunks the human species—if any species are at the centre of Nature it is not the human but the "lowest" soil microbe upon which all other life depends. Green ideas are seen by David as threatening to orthodox Marxism. It is as if socialists must politically delude and accommodate such a threat (by selectively quoting the Green bits of Marx and Engels) or to defend the Marxist fortress from the ghost (in Green tradings) of the arch-revisionist Edward Bernstein, with polemic rather than engage in flexible dialogue.

Such a socialism, without a Green basis, will however, offer only equal shares for all in extinction, even if we win the struggle to get the ships out of the Gulf. —Phil Shannon, Canberra

## International Socialist Organisation

### New branch formed in Melbourne

WITH twelve new members since the start of the Gulf War, the ISO in Melbourne has decided to establish a second branch. Melbourne North branch will be mainly based around work at LaTrobe University campus, as well as in local

### ISO invited to UN youth association

THE political turmoil arising from the Gulf War is opening up a wider audience for socialists. On 11 February, the United Nations Youth Association (UNYA) began its national conference in Melbourne. One of their organisers asked the ISO to present a talk outlining our attitude to the UN. She had attended an ISO meeting and knew our position would be controversial.

Thirty young people, mainly students, attended the session where we argued that if UNYA members were against the imperialist war in the Gulf, they would have to reject any illusions they had about the UN. A lively discussion followed in which the questions and comments were about what socialists saw as the alternative to the UN, and general questions about human nature, the profit system and the working class. That night 7 UNYA members and friends attended the regular ISO branch meeting in the city.

THREE ISO members visited Adelaide for the 16 February anti-war rally. Since there is no other organisation in Adelaide making the anti-sanctions, anti-imperialist argument, they were able to have quite an impact at a large public meeting.

They sold 130 papers over three days and met over a dozen people interested in getting to know more about our politics and tradition.

## What we stand for

### SOCIALISM

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need.

Although workers create society's wealth they have no control over production or distribution. We stand for socialism, the creation of a society in which the workers will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment. Countries like Russia, China and Cuba are not socialist. Workers under these state capitalist regimes also face the task of building their own revolutionary movement to smash the system and take control into their own hands.

### WORKERS' POWER

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and war. Liberation can only be won through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other

classes and fighting for real workers' power—a new kind of state based on democratically-elected workers' councils.

### REVOLUTION, NOT REFORMISM

Socialism cannot be created by gradual reforms as some in the Labor Party believe. The capitalist state—parliament, the military, the law—is a weapon of class rule and must be smashed. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

### INTERNATIONALISM

The working class exists in all countries and the struggle for socialism knows no national boundaries. We are for building an international movement organising to overcome national divisions between workers. Socialism cannot be built in a single country, socialist revolutions must be spread if they are to survive. We oppose imperialism, East and West, and support all national liberation struggles against imperialist domination. Australia is not an oppressed

country, but an imperialist power in its own right. This means we are opposed to Australian nationalism and immigration controls.

### LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION

We fight for democratic rights and liberation. We are against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and lesbians and gay men. All these forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. Combatting them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary struggle, that can create a socialist society free from oppression.

### REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

Crucial to a workers' movement smashing the capitalist state is a revolutionary workers' party built out of the day to day struggles around economic and political issues. We are taking

the first steps towards building such a party. Our task today is to argue for the ideas and traditions of revolutionary socialism, while fighting alongside militants and activists who are challenging the system.

It is out of these ideas and struggles that a mass revolutionary movement and party will eventually be built. If that's what you want to do, JOIN US!

I am interested in these ideas.

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Against sexism and economic exploitation...

# Philippine women fight back

**The Socialist:** Could you describe the discrimination that women face in the Philippines?

**Petite:** "The most usual form is among our women workers. They are the last ones to be taken in. And right now, because of the crisis, the first group that will be removed is the women."

"Many of our workers have to go through, we call it here, a virginity test. The company checks if they're pregnant or not, because definitely they don't want anyone pregnant because it lessens the capability of the woman to produce the quota."

"Then there's the pressure that if you don't play around with the men who head your department perhaps you're laid off—lay down or lay off."

**Petite:** "There is also oppression due to the Total War policy of the government [which aims to destroy the guerrillas of the Communist Party-led New People's Army]. During the Marcos regime women were raped and killed [by soldiers], but now under Cory Aquino it's usually gang rape or women are mutilated."

"The Total War policy has produced refugee centres where the majority are women—because when there is a military activity the men have all left the area and it is the women that meet the soldiers with all their hate."

"Another oppression is done by the US military bases in the Philippines. The social cost has

**LIFE FOR** most people in the Philippines is a battle for survival in the face of poverty, poor health and bad housing. The war has intensified the economic crisis. In Manila, David Glanz spoke to three women activists about the special problems facing Filipino women and how they are fighting back.

Petite Peredo is secretary-general of Gabriela, a coalition of more than 100 women's groups with 45,000 members, Sharon Cabusao is a member of its national secretariat and Lita Mariano is a spokeswoman for its peasant women's group.

produced street children, child prostitutes, thousands of women prostitutes, drug addicts, AIDS, and, of course, the endless degradation of the women. Around the bases the women are not called Filipinas but little brown fucking machines."

**The Socialist:** What problems do Australian men cause in the Philippines?

**Petite:** We have a lot of beer houses here run by Australian men and then they are the usual clients of the women, and we have mail order brides organised from Australia.

"The government ban on introduction agencies might be a good thing but the root of the problem is that there's no employment."



THE picket line at St. Scholastica's.

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**The Socialist:** What does Gabriela do?

**Petite:** "We have different commissions. We have one that deals with battered women, incest, anything along that line. Then one that deals with women's health and reproductive rights. We have a commission on women's human rights that deals with state repression."

"We also have alternative, non-sexist education for children, etc. Then we have recently put up a commission on migrant Filipinas because of the countless women workers that go abroad."

"Then, of course, we have campaigns, we continue our militant actions on issues that concern women. Our major goal is to educate our women, to organise them and to mobilise them."

**The Socialist:** What access do Filipino women have to contraception?

**Sharon:** "The Marcos government [overthrown in 1986] enabled women to have access to contraceptives, in that some of these were forced on their bodies. There were cases of women who gave birth in public hospitals and did not know that an IUD was then inserted."

"Recently, Cory Aquino came out with a statement saying she wanted to uphold women's right to choose, but, of course, it was a very general statement. Women need access to education and economic independence to make a real choice."

"There was a recent study which showed that about 63 per cent of women did not want to have children anymore but they're not using any kind of contraceptives because they're afraid."

"Most women cannot read the newspapers in English and cannot get information about side effects and so on. And, of course, the condom has limitations in terms of the acceptance of the male partner."

"The Philippines, like any other Third World country, will



PETITE Peredo (left) Secretary-General of Gabriela and Sharon Cabusao from the National Secretariat

presents a big market for contraceptives which women's groups in other countries have already resisted, like Depo Provera, which is still being prescribed. And Dalkon shields."

**The Socialist:** Do you get much support from men in the mass organisations?

**Lita:** "The federation of peasant women is now slowly asserting its presence so some of the males are beginning to take notice."

"When members go to give women's orientation seminars they also invite members of the KMP [the militant peasants' organisation]."

The seminars take four to five days and the husbands take care of the children."

**Petite:** "All campaigns now accept that women must be present. In Bayan [a left-nationalist party], the chair is a woman. In the KMU [the militant union federation], one of the demands is the women's issue."

## All women are not sisters

**ONE GROUP** of women workers who are fighting back can be found on a picket line in central Manila. The 117 strikers at Saint Scholastica College (teachers and non-academic staff) had been on strike for seven weeks when they spoke to *The Socialist*.

They are demanding union recognition, smaller classes, fewer hours of teaching, and a wage rise. A new teacher currently gets 3854 pesos (\$190) a month, a janitor even less—the poverty line is 6000 pesos (\$300).

The strikers, nearly all women, have received wide support. "A lot of factory workers have been sympathetic with us," Cecille Sipin told *The Socialist*. Some of the college students had also backed the strikers.

The Gabriela coalition is a widely respected part of the Filipino progressive movement.

And that's all the more reason why the Saint Scholastica college strike has caused widespread confusion and consternation among activists.

The college is run by nuns. The dean is Sister Mary John Mamanzan, chairperson of Gabriela.

Sister Mary John, described by her Gabriela colleagues as "very progressive", is opposed to "capitalist-style" unions in "socially oriented" schools.

The strikers say this is nonsense. No union has ever been established in any church-run school.

Sharon Cabusao of Gabriela says the situation is "confusing".

### CONFUSING

"It's quite a complicated case you know, in the sense that Sister Mary John, the management of the college, has been arguing that you do not have to literally translate capitalist perspectives in the school."

"This is a socially orientated institution and there are many scholarship programs for children of poor families and children of parents who are political cases. In that sense it has a social orientation. It's not a purely capitalist venture."

"I think the management offered some compromise but it seems that a lot of other issues come out and it gets confusing, and it's not clear to us why these things

are happening in the first place when we've known all along that Saint Scholastica is one of the institutions that are really progressive."

"The views are differing and we don't know really which to believe."

The confusion is not surprising. It stems from a fundamental weakness of feminist analysis—of seeing the main division in the world as between men and women rather than between bosses and workers.

Sister Mary John is not "playing a male game". Her behavior is that of an employer. Her first loyalty is to management, not to the women on the picket line.

The strikers are not right-wingers trying to wreck the progressive work of the college. They are workers who cannot live on their pitiful wages and who have been forced to take collective action to survive.

Socialists have no hesitation in giving whole-hearted support to the strikers.

The fight for real women's liberation includes a struggle for economic liberation. And that means fighting our bosses, regardless of their gender.