

FREE NO. 30

COUNTER INFORMATION

Feb./ March/ April '91

Don't Die Of Ignorance

THIS war already effects millions of people. But around the Globe millions are opposing it. It is supposedly a war against a dictator. One who killed and tortured thousands of Kurdish separatists, union activists and ordinary Iraqis working for social and political change, whilst backed to the hilt by the USA. His mistake was to tread on the wrong toes when he stepped out of line and invaded a "democracy" where some of the 400,000 "Kuwaitis" had a vote, the other 2.2 million residents had no rights whatsoever.

At its most horrific reality it is a war for control of oil profits, and defending western investments in ruthless, reactionary, monarchic regimes in Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE. As the "Financial times" said on 18 January, "Not only is this oil at the heart of the war, but the oil is at the heart of the world's most significant oil reserves". The Middle East has over 60% of the world's oil reserves. The USA itself has only about 10 years domestic supplies left, but still uses double the amount of oil per capita than Germany.

To preserve the continuing power and profits of western capitalism, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people will be slaughtered, maimed and psychologically destroyed. The oil companies who own the oil in the Middle East are some of the biggest industrial companies in the world. Shell and Exxon are in the top four, last year Texaco made £3.5 billion profit, BP £1.7 billion. Good news for the Kuwaiti monarchy who own 10% of BP...

Some German newspapers report at least 300,000 Iraqi casualties. Most casualties will be civilians. This is neither a 'clean' nor precise war. A B52 dropping ten tons of bombs from three miles high on a city of 4 million people is carnage and terrorism incarnate. The only sanitary part of this war is the 'news'. The 'low' western aircraft losses turn out to be the same as those of Korea and Vietnam; 4 per 1,000 missions. The loss rate for Tornados is 10 losses per 1000...

Ordinary troops, who will bear the brunt of the carnage, will be Arabic conscripts or Western economic conscripts. Black and Hispanic soldiers and those from poverty blighted regions will make up the bulk of the Western armies. As an 11 year old speaking to the "Evening Times" in Glasgow said "No war is a just war. Its' just a waste of peoples' lives."

But there has been opposition from soldiers on both sides. There are reliable reports of many Iraqis deserting, and among Western troops there is significant opposition to the war. US Marine, Jeff Paterson, who refused to go to Saudi Arabia won his case against the US army and is now civilian and free. US Troops in Saudi Arabia staged an Anti war demonstration during Bush's last visit. Many reservists in Britain are refusing to go, and there are reports of many US troops going AWOL in Germany.

The racism and hypocrisy of the west is exposed when governments intern Arabs on the pretext of "National Security". Many are in fact opponents of the Iraqi regimes. Their 'crime' is not to support the American destruction of the Middle East. In Britain hundreds of students picketed the Aliens' office in London on 31 January protesting against this State organised racism.

Similarly, the sudden Western concern for Kurds in Iraq doesn't extend to Kurds in other parts of the Middle East. In Turkey the repression against all aspects of Kurdish independence and culture continues.

DON'T DIE FOR OIL.

Protests in countries with large Moslem populations have been massive. When the war began half a million people demonstrated in Yemen and 300,000 in Algiers. There have also been national strikes in Turkey, Morocco and Pakistan to protest their countries' support for the war.

Saddam Hussain's verbal support for the cause of Arab freedom is just a cynical ploy, especially given his regimes ruthless oppression of Iraqi citizens and foreign workers. But many Arabs support him as someone who appears to take action against the two countries who have caused so much destruction and oppression in the Middle East- Israel and the USA.

Israel's 1982 Lebanese invasion and the USA's Naval bombardment of Beirut killed up to 19,000 and injured 30,000. Israel still denies most Arabs in Israel and the occupied territories a gas mask. They have also imposed an unprecedented long and brutal curfew in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

World wide resistance to this war has been massive. Even before the shooting war started on 17 January, people were taking to the streets: 10,000 marched in Glasgow, and 50,000 in London and over 100,000 in Paris on the 12th. On 15 January 50,000 demonstrated in San Francisco - closing down the Federal Building. Two days later 100,000 took to the streets and the Golden Gate bridge was also blockaded for several hours. In New York the Brooklyn Bridge was shut down by demonstrators. On 14 January students in Seattle marched 5 miles along Interstate Highway 5 blocking all south-bound traffic. In the city centre they joined other protesters, intercepted police messages talked of 59,200 demonstrators, the media later reported 12,000. ... In Germany on the 17th. there were over 120 different demonstrations against the war. The 100,000 people who marched in Berlin were attacked by the police with water cannons and tear gas. An important feature of many protests were attempts to blockade main roads and railway stations. A blockade of abandoned cars on the Severn Bridge stopping the rush hour traffic into Bristol on 18 Jan.

On 18 January 1/3 of schools in Westfalia/Rheinland were closed as both students and teachers went on strike to join anti war protests. In Italy many Universities have been occupied by students. In France, "The Guardian" on 24 January notes: "Many teachers have changed their timetables because students refuse to take part in classes they consider derisory or because they prefer to discuss the war with their history or geography teachers". The French government is becoming worried by the increasing number of school pupils taking part in anti - war rallies.

**"No war is a just war.
Its' just a waste of peoples' lives."**

A BBC reporter in Washinton noted moral opposition and "purely symbolic protest like church services and candle lit vigils, will not worry George Bush". But by opposing the real causes of the war, capitalism and imperialism, we also actively oppose the war. Governments need domestic stability and consent to fight wars. We can refuse this support, AND fight back. Organised mass opposition to the Poll Tax and other forms of taxation, strikes and other industrial sabotage can all help stretch limited State resources. An Independent on Sunday's editorial succinctly observed that wars: "are largely won or lost on the home front ..."

Demonstrations, occupations, blockades and direct action against those supporting the war such as oil companies, banks, media monopolies and governments can all disrupt their business as usual. We can bring the war home to those who benefit from the slaughter and destruction happening in the Middle East. Widespread public awareness and information campaigns can spread the message that this war is for the benefit of the rich and powerful, that we gain nothing from the whole repressive, oil dependant, profit driven system. That, for the sake of ourselves, the troops in the Middle East, and oppressed people the world over, we must resist and oppose this war on all fronts. Anti war groups have already began in local communities, schools, workplaces, and unions. This mass organised opposition is only the beginning, and our real enemy, the ruling class knows it is in for a hard fight.

A CLASSLESS SOCIETY?

The government and media are pushing John Major's vision of a classless society where success depends on talent and effort. Class divisions, we're assured, are a thing of the past.

Yet they say this when the poll tax has provoked the biggest wave of riots in Britain for decades. Those well-educated and born to wealth or power still succeed and everyone else can now be dismissed for not trying hard enough. Millions are forced into boring repetitive jobs over which they have no control, manipulated like so many statistics by multinational companies more powerful than many countries. While they and the politicians play their power-games, we take the consequences. It is not our bosses who're dying in the desert to protect oil interests.

John Major's background serves as a token for the state to disguise the class structures. They'll never disappear as long as a rich and powerful minority control our lives and live off our labour.

While we continue to invest power in any set of bosses, there will always be a ruling class. To get rid of it, we must take control of our own struggles, not leave them in the hands of a power-mad elite. This means organising ourselves through co-operation and collective action, not hierarchy; no-one can create equality on our behalf. It means working towards a world where no-one has authority over others; where society is geared towards the needs of everyone, not the greed of a few.

Long march

IN JANUARY 70,000 men and women from Turkey's coal mining community staged a 260 kilometre march from Zonguldak towards the capital Ankara.

Marching for 5 days through the mountains the striking miners demanded higher wages and improved safety. As the Gulf war loomed the miners called for "HUMAN RIGHTS NOT WAR". The government replied by deploying troops to halt the march. After a stand-off negotiations started with the government.

The miners' battle was part of a mass strike wave. 2,200,000 participated in a general strike on 3 January. 150,000 metal workers and 10,000 in the paper industry were on strike.

The formation of grass roots, elected strike committees and the massive and active participation of women were outstanding features of the miners' struggle.

Acknowledgements: *Le Monde Libertaire*

IN HACKNEY, London over 200 Turkish and Kurdish workers struck in solidarity with the Turkish general strike on 3 January. Police attacked their demo, arresting 20.

The demonstrators marched on Stoke Newington police station, where another police assault resulted in 35 further arrests. According to press reports 25 police sustained 'minor injuries'.

GAYS ATTACKED

SECTION 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill attempts to criminalise consenting homosexual behaviour, ie soliciting by a man, procuring of homosexual acts and indecency between men. This means 2 men can be jailed for chatting each other up, exchanging phone numbers, spending the night together, or showing affection for each other in public.

Paragraph 16 of the Childrens Act removes the right everyone has to be a foster parent. This is to prevent gays and lesbians fostering children.

As protests grow, in late January over 20 lesbians and gays took brushes and buckets to the Houses of Parliament to scrub it clean of homophobia.

EDINBURGH WOMEN AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

TWO WOMEN from the group were in court for breach of the peace and violently resisting arrest. Due to blatant lies in police evidence, the sheriff acquitted both women on 10 Jan.

15 February: three women are on trial at the district court (opposite City Chambers) pleading not guilty to 'causing damage to property and spraypainting', after an incident at John Menzies Warehouse. All welcome to picket the court at 9.30 am.

20 Dec.: 200 women reclaimed the night", marching through the streets and stopping outside John Menzies in Princes St chanting "Menzies make the profit, women pay the price".

INSIDE INFO

PLUGGING BRAINS TO MAINS

THE Campaign Against Psychiatric Oppression is, unfortunately, one of the most neglected aspects of the class struggle. Most psychiatric 'patients' are working-class women, victims of the stresses of modern capitalism. In Britain 15,000 people are 'sectioned' - imprisoned without trial in psychiatric hospitals every year.

"Psychiatry is one of the most subtle methods of repression in advanced capitalist society, exorcising the 'devils' of social distress by psychosurgery (butchery of the brain), electric shock treatment (plugging brains into mains), and the heavy use of mind controlling drugs.

The 'mental patient' is a sacrifice we make while we serve the gods of the capitalist religion."

From the CAPO manifesto, available from: CAPO, 28A Edgar House, Kingsmead Estate, Homerton Road, London E9. (Letters only) CAPO is made up of people who have come together as a result of their experience of psychiatry)

FIGHTING ON!

JOHN PEROTTI was imprisoned at 19 for the non-violent theft of \$7 and has been in prison since because of his prison activism, mostly in isolation. At 36 he is still in solitary. John is a self-taught lawyer and he and others have succeeded in forcing an enquiry into the use of high-pressure hoses against prisoners.

Mail is greatly appreciated. John Perotti 176-712, Lebanon Correctional Facility, PO Box 56, Lebanon, Ohio, 43036, USA

PRISON RIOTS

JAN. 1991: After the murder by screws of 6 prisoners in 3 days, prisoners fought hand-to-hand with screws in 2 Bangladeshi prisons. 2 guards died and 4 were injured. The revolt has spread to a third prison.

INSIDE INFO and Attack International are producing a pamphlet 'Prison Revolt 1990' on the uprising in Strangeways and other prisons. We'd like first hand reports, newspaper clippings etc. Anything relevant. Thanks

NAZIS' WATERLOO

ON 8 December at least 500 anti-fascists surrounded a BNP national rally in a pub in Waterloo St Glasgow. Windows were smashed and police vans attacked as the cops shuttled the 40-odd Nazis out of the area. There were 36 arrests - all anti-fascists, as the police protected the Nazis and attacked the crowd on horseback and on foot. The BNP had boasted that we wouldn't find their meeting place but they ended up high-tailing it out of town.

SUPPORT NEEDED

LAST SEPTEMBER in London, 3 anti-fascists got a total of 11 years imprisonment for assaulting notorious Nazi activist Nicki Crane. Crane served a year in prison for attacking an Asian family with a broken bottle.

WRITE TO : Tony David NT 1338, David Phelan NT 1337, H.M.P. Pentonville, Caledonian Rd, London N1 Mark Malin NT 1335, H.M.P. The Verne, Portland, Dorset Donations/Info AFA Welfare Fund, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XY

200 cabbies in Peterborough went on strike early in January following the murder of a Muslim colleague.

Chapelton Leeds



House searches and raids on clubs and parties is creating an atmosphere which could flare into a riot. Over 100

people marched to Millgarth police station, Leeds on 8 December, showing that they would not tolerate police

GREECE

A million Greek workers began a 48 hour strike against anti-strike laws on 6 December.

Further repressive laws, on education, were met with massive opposition by students, teachers and workers. 2,500 schools and colleges have been occupied throughout Greece.

There have been massive demos since early December and the occupations continued through Xmas. On 8 January a fascist group and ONNED (the ruling party's youth group) murdered a teacher involved in the struggle. His murderers are associates of the Greek PM.

On 10 Jan. a huge demo turned into an enormous riot with one of Athens's main square's occupied. Burning barricades were met by police teargas. 4 people were killed by the police, one beaten to death, the other 3 suffocated in a fire started by the police to hide the first's body.

Fighting continued throughout the night. Buses were used as barricades, molotovs thrown, banks and state buildings attacked and their contents put on the burning barricades. Police fired thousands of rounds of poisonous tear gas.

All over Greece the occupations continue to challenge state-power. AT Athens Poly the Greek flag flies at half mast with the red and black flag flying proudly above it.

On 23 Jan. occupations continued in some schools, and in all the universities in Athens.

Info: Athens ABC



WINTER CRACKDOWN

THE SOVIET UNION faces disintegration, economic collapse and civil strife.

Gorbachov believes that "the problem (is) that our power has been torn to shreds. The chain of command is broken, the electric current is switched off, and the economy is grinding to a halt. We are in a state of chaos...."

Many of the Republics believe that the 'Union' can only be reformed from below. The Soviet Nomenklatura (ruling class) are now waging a desperate campaign to re-censor the media, terrorise the opposition groups and provoke unrest in the Republics, forcing Gorbachov to assert direct Presidential rule.

On 30 December 'Tent City' in Red Square was bulldozed and the homeless protestors sent 'home' or interned in prison or mental hospitals.

Mass protests in Lithuania gave way to the resignation of reform ex-Communist Ministers on 8 January. The storming of key buildings by paratroopers led to 80,000 defending the parliament as the nationalist Saujdis confronted the Russo-Polish minority. 13 were killed and protests followed, such as the 250,000 who marched in nearby Latvia on 19 January in solidarity and anger.

ON THE STREETS

On 20 January over 100,000 Muscovites joined 40,000 in Leningrad, and the one million in Baku (commemorating the military clampdown in Azerbaijan) in denouncing the destabilising aggression in the Baltic and the oppressive centralising reaction to reform. Later that same day 'black beret' units stormed the Latvian Interior Ministry and a gun battle left 4 dead. Gorbachov again took no clear stance. The Special Units left the Ministry and returned to barracks. 2 days later the print warehouse for the Lithuanian press was seized by paratroopers.

Soviet citizens are otherwise obsessed, with the daily struggle to survive, and in this climate the KGB and other state organs are reclaiming their authoritarian power by cracking down on the 'Black Market' and (unofficial) racketeers. In January Gorbachov announced that Soviet troops would patrol the streets of the Republics. The only counter-power to this clamp-down is the organised working class. With the end of winter we could see a challenge to see off stalinists, centrists & liberal democrats alike. Class struggle - not a rival nationalism - is the way to defeat Soviet state repression.

UNIFIED RESISTANCE

WITH the reunification of Germany the people and workers of East Germany have found out that the "West's" dream is no different from the "East's" nightmare.

28.11.90 In the first major industrial dispute 260,000 rail workers ended a successful 3 day strike over plans for 68,000 redundancies and plans to retire workers over 45. They also won a wage increase for comparable wages with West German workers.

In East Berlin hundreds of workers occupied the new capitalist Truehard privatisation agency when it announced a 40,000 jobs cut.

Nov.'90 : Friedrichshain (a working class district in East Berlin) saw 3,000 heavily armed police attack 1,000 folk who had come to defend 13 squatted houses. After 3 days of fighting the squats were "vacated", but a march of 10,000 was organised to show that homelessness will not be accepted and that squatting will continue.

14 January: At the famous Haffenstrasse squat in Hamburg a demo of 3,000 was organised at very short notice to protest at the court withdrawing Haffenstrasse's licence as a social centre, leaving it open to attack from the police.

This is all part of a Europe-wide effort to end squatting : Germany, Netherlands, England, France, Scandinavia have all seen the authorities trying to "squat-bust".



FRANCE

URBAN unrest and High School revolt are worrying the authorities in France.

On 12 Nov. a march of over 200,000 school students exploded - demonstrators clashed with police and liberated goods from shops in rich central Paris.

Opposition to over-crowding and under-funding in the education system is mingling with anger at racism and the poor quality of life in the drab housing schemes around the major cities. Many of the population there are of North African origin.

Following the mass uprising in Vaulx en Velin, Lyons in October, rebellions have flared in other areas. Both Argenteuil and Montfermeil, on the outskirts of Paris have seen locals clashing with police and looting from shops.

LUBICON NATION

24 NOVEMBER: The Lubicon Cree Nation of Northern Alberta, Canada, fought back against timber operations on their land by firebombing and destroying logging equipment. Thirteen people have been arrested and charged. For 10 years the Lubicon Nation have been resisting oil and timber developments that destroyed its traditional hunting and trapping economy and forced 95% of the nation onto welfare.

Cameroon Riots

WIDESPREAD rioting and demonstrations, led to at least 2 deaths in Cameroon in January, deepening public resentment of repressive government measures. The rioting was ignited by the trial of 2 journalists who had refused to submit for censorship an article critical of the government.

MOROCCO

AT LEAST 33 people were killed during 2 days of rioting in Fez, Morocco during December's general strike over demands to double the minimum wage. A 15% pay rise has been rejected with demands now also calling for the suspension of the trials and release of those arrested.

EXTORTIONATE, UNFAIR - AND UNWORKABLE

The poll tax is extortionate, unfair - and unworkable. The movement against it has drawn millions of people into political activity for the first time in their lives. The non-payment campaign is one of the largest movements of civil disobedience in British history. 12 million are still not paying the tax.

Scottish Sheriff Courts have granted over 1,200,000 summary warrants against people in serious arrears for last year's poll tax - one in three registered for the tax! Out of all the summary warrants, earnings arrestments have been made in fewer than 6,500 cases and only 7,900 bank freezings have been carried out. (Scotsman 26/11/90)

FIGHTING THE LAW

In England and Wales Councils are still taking people to court - but mass action can stop them. On 14 January 1,500 people, mostly women and children, turned up at Southwark court and occupied the building. "It was absolute chaos, the courts couldn't handle the numbers. The police were stopping people from coming in to their own court cases!" The crowd didn't move until the court declared all 5,000 cases adjourned!

Defiance of the law is developing yet further. The Guardian, 28.1.91, reports that one Council sent out 16,000 forms to non-payers who had been served with liability orders, demanding information on their employment to allow their wages to be arrested. Only 700 forms were returned! According to Freedom, 12.1.91, nationally less than 10% have returned such forms, despite refusal being technically a criminal offence.

ROBBERIES

From our Hackney correspondent:

"On 16 November, the first day of socialist bailiffs, there was an excellent picket of the council leader's home with up to 50 people plus a megaphone! The council was using 3 offices for people to pay the poll tax in until recently. The Hoxton office has been closed down after a succession of bricked windows, graffiti, and abuse. The final straw was 2 armed robberies, the last one netting a mere £129 - shows how much local people are paying!"

WORKERS ACT

Which brings us to Newcastle where the postal workers held their own brand of anti poll tax action. They walked out for a day in protest at being asked to deliver poll tax summonses and reminders the Saturday before Xmas!

5 December saw a 3,000 strong demo by council workers in Sheffield against threatened cuts, which forced the council to back off from immediate sackings. On two occasions recreation workers have invaded council meetings. And over 100 young people invaded a meeting of the District Labour party to protest at plans to close youth clubs.

COUNCIL GETS RED CARD

25 anti poll tax protestors from independent local groups brought the Lothian Regional Council's special poll tax meeting to an ear splitting halt on 28 January. The anti poll taxers announced "We're not going to let this council implement a £150 poll tax rise and make £20 million cuts. We're giving the Council the red card." At this whistles shrieked and red cards were brandished.

The police moved in and 4 people were charged with breach of the peace. An immediate picket of St. Leonard's Police Station ensured they were released after 3 hours.



SHOOT THE SHERIFF

On 10 January goods were seized from 3 houses in Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock. This was Scotland's first seizure of goods for failure to pay arrears. Anti poll tax activists hit back with 2 occupations of the sheriff officers, Abernethy McIntyre, within a week. As we went to press there had been as yet no attempt to hold the actual warrant sale - the anti poll tax movement is pledged to act to stop any such attempt.

In Drumchapel, Possilpark and Knightswood in Glasgow on 16 November Sheriff Officers tried to poind goods. Between 100-200 watched each home from 8 am - 8 pm. No poinding occurred. Following the Inverclyde seizures, Sheriff Officers said they'd be doing their "work" in the Bellshill area. Over 100 people waited for them. They didn't come.

SELF DEFENCE

Heavy fines and sentences have been handed down to those arrested in the "Battle of Trafalgar" last March and the 20 October anti poll tax march in London. Most charges are either trumped-up, are ludicrous 'offences' (eg shouting), or are justified self-defence against police brutality. Write to prisoners. Info from: Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign.

Wayne Calder, NTOO82, HMYOI Huntercome, Huntercome Place, Nuffield, Henley on Thames, Oxon RG9 5SB. Arrested on 31 March in Trafalgar Sq. demo. Sentenced to 2 years.

Alan Clarke, MV2254, HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Rd., London N7 8TT (Alan can't read so it would be best to send cards rather than letters.) Sentenced to 2 years.

We cannot let our demonstrations be provoked and brutally attacked by the police, a blatantly political attempt by the state to drive us off the streets and frighten others away from demonstrating freely.

23 MARCH CENTRAL LONDON DEMO

Let's make this a massive show of our solidarity and determination to fight on till the government's poll tax is abolished, and an amnesty is declared for all non-payers and for all arrested and imprisoned anti poll tax defendants.

Through opposing the poll tax thousands of people are getting to know each other. We can use this experience in organising ourselves to take action for other positive changes. Stopping other debt enforcement including evictions and gas/electricity cut-offs, combatting racist and sexual harassment and fighting for better services are all possible. If we can chase the sheriff officers and bailiffs away when they come for the poll tax, why should we let them into our community at all? By defeating the poll tax we will have shifted the balance of power and questioned whether we need "Them" at all!

Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign, c/o Haldane Society, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP. Tel. 071 833 8958
Refuse and Resist, PO Box 239, Glasgow G3 6RA
For a national address list write to 3D, c/o 116 The Avenue, London N17

COUNTER INFORMATION: Write, P/H C.I., c/o 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh, EH1, UK. Write for info on local C.I. distribution and other local activities. Or N.England; C.I., c/o 52 Call Lane, Leeds. W.Scotland; C.I., c/o P.O. Box 239, Glasgow, G3. C.I. relies entirely on donations (stamps money etc.) and each issue costs us £500 so we desperately need donations and new standing orders. **WRITE!** This issue went to press on 6 February 1991.