

Labour & Trade Union Review

May-June 1991

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EUROPE AND THE KURDS

The UN and the New World Order

Labour and Student Politics

Cohse, Nalگو and Nupe

Co-ops in the Irish Republic

Labour and Education

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plus

CTCs

Notes on the News

Trade Union Diary

Heffer Interview





Neil Kinnock - student politician

Business and the press, the traditional friends of the Tories, are doing their utmost to ensure that they win the next election, whenever it may be. Judging by business's widely reported new-found confidence in the economy and the popular press's playing down of the splits in the Tory party, it could be sooner than we think. Much will depend of course on the results of the local elections: a reasonable performance by the Tories could mean a June election, but it is unlikely. Labour have been calling for a general election for some months in the belief that they would win it. At the moment the opinion polls point to a Labour victory, but there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip.

Kinnock's single-minded leadership has resulted in a revision of policy across the board which Party members, desperate to see the back of the Tories, have supported with varying degrees of enthusiasm. A number of policies from which the Left drew much of its strength - unilateral nuclear disarmament, opposition to the EEC and public ownership - have virtually been abandoned. And it is a measure of the Left's demise that the cries of protest from the constituency parties have been barely audible. **Labour & Trade Union Review** hopes for a Labour victory, but at the same time we are conscious that it could result in the Party taking further, perhaps irreversible, steps down the social democratic road. The party badly needs a new socialist programme, but it will not

get one under the present leadership.

Kinnock had the opportunity to adopt a stand of principled opposition to the Gulf War, but he didn't. On the contrary, there was barely a difference between Kinnock and Major. Labour's call for sanctions to be given an opportunity to take effect, for example, was merely a mask to disguise its macho stance. During Thatcher's premiership the Party created a new caring image to counteract the Tories' hard-faced indifference. But now that Major has softened their tone there is little between the substance and style of both Parties. With Thatcher at the helm, Labour could offer the electorate something noticeably different. Now it cannot.

In an interview on Radio 4 on 14th April, Neil Kinnock was asked to explain the difference between Labour policy and Tory policy, to which he replied we mean it and they don't. A few days later, Labour's campaigns manager, Jack Cunningham, was asked the same question and said that Labour would be more Thatcherite with the nation's housekeeping. It would be a novel experience to have a party contesting an election whose main policy was good housekeeping. Up to now all parties have sought office in order to implement a *political* programme and did the best they could without making a mess of the housekeeping. But all of them have made a mess. That is the nature of political government.

Elsewhere in this issue of **L&TUR**, Eric Heffer describes Kinnock as a student politician. A more apt description could not be made. Kinnock has elevated the inconsequential politics of the university debating society to the highest echelons of the Party. He made his name in Cardiff where his charm and verbosity won over immature youth. The fact that he was able to do the same in the Party in the 1970s and early 1980s, where he masqueraded as a left socialist, said a lot about the emotional state of Party members at the time. It also reflected the absence of real political debate in the Party and, sadly, this continues to be the case in many instances.

It is the task of **Labour & Trade Union Review**, and other journals of the Left, to resurrect the tradition of real political debate within the Party. But first, Party members must learn to *think* about political issues, rather than indulging in knee-jerk politics which, ironically, Neil Kinnock has often accused his opponents of doing. It will not be an easy task. A Party that has had the vigour and, dare we say it, idealism squeezed out of it, will find the taste for thought and debate difficult to swallow. A thinking, debating Party will be in a strong position to develop the kind of new Socialist programme that the British people will support and which will, once again, make us all proud to be Labour.

Trade Union Diary

by Dave Chapel

The jobbed and the jobless

I read in some newspaper recently that only the unemployed are bothered by unemployment. That those with a job are unconcerned, and therefore it will not be electorally significant.

Unless I am working with and meeting very unrepresentative people indeed, this is not true. The hack in question is more likely to be regurgitating a piece of wisdom he came across in the early 1980s. Then, certain categories of workers were being made redundant and one could be more or less certain of a job if one didn't belong to any of these categories - mostly older branches of manufacturing.

More importantly, there was a belief in the early 1980s that many industries needed to be shaken out and that practices mainly associated with these industries led nowhere. The country was seen to be in a mess. And Thatcherism Part I was being given the chance to sort out this mess - a task neither the Labour Party nor the unions seemed able or willing to take on. Unemployment was part of the price to pay. And so it did not affect elections.

The unemployment of the early 1980s pared our basic industries to the bone and beyond. And once again, at the start of the 1990s, these are being hit. In the last year the AEU has seen 36,000 of its members in the engineering industry lose their jobs. Employers in machine tool companies, the basis of manufacturing, are, according to the *Financial Times*, staring disaster in the face.

But unemployment is spreading far beyond manufacturing - with the South-East of England being worst hit, followed by East Anglia which more or less escaped entirely ten years ago. No sector is safe. Now everyone feels threatened. More importantly, there is no longer a feeling that unemployment is a by-product of longer-term regeneration.

Thatcherism Part II did not produce a healthy industrial base or a stable service sector or even a sound financial system which could supply those useful invisible exports which so often saved our bacon in the past. Thatcherism Part II substituted for economic policy a

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form of alchemy. You can have gold where there was no gold before. Pay £100 for Telecom shares on Monday and you can have £200 back on Tuesday. People must have equated the shareholding democracy with the magic circle. Buy a house, sell it, buy another, sell again. Like a licence to print money. And of course if you can buy one belonging to the local community, the profit is even greater. That's the property-owning democracy. What a wonderful world. And all those lovely jobs telling people what to do with all this money falling from trees, or dealing in shares, or getting a nice percentage as an estate agent etc.

Years ago, it was explained to those of us who produced surplus value that unless we actually did add value by our labour and didn't consume that extra value but allowed a lot of it to be reinvested, there would be no *real* growth and no possibility of any *real* increase in our standard of living. And

quite right too. This lesson was conveniently forgotten by the prophets of Thatcherism. Perhaps some of them imagined that those enriching themselves would save and provide funds for investment. But the selfish mentality of the 1980s could not do this. Money was falling from trees, life was great, and it was spend, spend, spend. Bigger houses, flash cars, fancy clothes.

Not only was the new windfall spent. Money which still hadn't appeared (but surely would!) was spent also. Credit was thrust upon the new spending classes by all kinds of financial institutions. So, far from investing for the future, the future was spent as well.

Well, money doesn't grow on trees. The party had to end. Commercial and personal bankruptcy was everywhere. Homes were repossessed as never before. Even the privatised monopolies making super-profits are now being pressed to

come back into the real world. Society is reasserting itself against British Telecom and the rest. And of course there is the rapidly growing and widespread unemployment. The doctor of the early 1980s was high on a hallucinogen and the patient is suffering the consequences.

This round of unemployment is a consequence of Thatcherite policy. Unfortunately, Labour and the unions were greatly intimidated by Thatcherism. Thatcherism was a total world view. In the course of achieving and maintaining power, it persuaded many people that there was no alternative to it. It intimidated not only the disconnected intelligentsia of the kind who ended up in **Tactical Voting 87** and **Charter 88**. It also intimidated the majority of the leadership of the unions and the Labour Party. It did this to the extent that even they believed that socialism must be wrong, or at least well past its sell-by date. And now, even as Thatcherism has so obviously brought the country to avoidable recession, very little is seen from our movement by way of a socialist alternative.

As this magazine has so often pointed out, it was not socialism that failed and gave rise to Thatcherism. It was the failure of the Labour and Trade Union leadership to cope with and build on the successes of socialism. The Tories have caused the present rising unemployment. They have also, it seems, intimidated Labour into abandoning the socialist aim of full employment. We effectively had full employment for decades, and we can have it again. That must be the goal of the unions and the Labour Party.

Union blues

Trade unions seem to have a fatalistic attitude to the world about them these days. Governments and employers announce measures vitally affecting workers' interests, and unions may or may not react to these measures. Very rarely do they seriously set out an agenda of their own.

This passive attitude became predominant in the movement in the mid-seventies. A number of progressive trade union leaders like Jack Jones, Len Murray and David Lea attempted to go beyond the free market determination of wages and conditions. They sought a place for shop-floor representatives on company boards in order to help determine company policy. They sought a practical partnership with government to help determine national social and economic policy. They were prepared to discuss a rational and orderly forum for determining wages.

They were roundly defeated in the trade union movement. At that time a stalemate existed, whereby the government and the employers had lost the power to have their own way, but though the unions had a negative blocking power, they had no positive proposals for a new way of doing things. Jones & Co. were proposing a new way, but were unsuccessful. People like Hugh Scanlon and Arthur Scargill stated as a principle that it was 'management's right to manage' and that it was no business of trade unionists.

Things could not go on like this. Someone had to run the place. So the new Conservative government, along with the employers, set about destroying the unions power to veto what they didn't like. The task wasn't difficult. The general public, including trade union members, may be in two minds about different proposals on how society should be ordered. But the choice between the government and the employers running things, and no one running things, was no choice at all. So the unions took a hammering. Very well, we all make mistakes - even dreadful ones. But where we make mistakes and get a terrible hiding for our troubles, we are reasonably expected to learn something. Not so, it seems, with the unions.

People are being thrown out of work in droves. Wages are being cut. The government is planning more anti-union laws. And the unions are utterly helpless. Very mild versions of the policies proposed in the 1970s are emerging from the TUC. Measures which could have stopped the rot then and could so in the future. And most unions hold up their hands in horror.

They will never, they say, give up their freedom to bargain collectively. What, I ask, has free collective bargaining done for printers, who have recently accepted a £50 a month wage cut? Or for miners, who haven't had an agreed wage rise for over five years? Or for the staff at GCHQ, or for the 100,000 who lost their jobs in the last month? What has it done about child benefit, about

pensions, about public transport, about the health service? Damn all. That's what it has done.

I am sure that most trade union members want more say over what the government does, and over what the enterprises they work in do. They want better pay and conditions. They want jobs. If this takes works councils, incomes policies, social contracts and the like, what's wrong with that?

The donkeys who lead us don't like it. Well too bad. The time has long arrived to get rid of most of these self-seeking time servers anyway. This diary will in a future issue be taking a closer look at the individuals who purport to lead our movement.

The Labour Party and the German example

The recent Labour Party policy is 20,000 words of blandness - much what one would have expected. Labour is motivated by one thing only - the desire of Mr & Mrs Kinnock to live in No. 10 Downing Street. But even blandness has to say something, however vague. It is then down to interested parties to make what they can of the bland policies.

Labour talks about working in partnership with the unions and the employers. It also talks about being similar in nature to other socialist parties - for example the Socialist Party of Germany. Very well. Let us take them at their word.

The unions, if they have the will, could on this basis insist on *prior* consultation on each of the many individual government policies which affect their members. They could insist on emulating the Germans by having one third of the board members of large private companies elected by the workforce - and half of the board members in the case of nationalised industries.

If a Labour government is elected, it will be mainly interested in a quiet life. The unions could go a long way towards guaranteeing that quiet life. And many of the demands it makes in exchange, such as those above, needn't cost the government a penny! If, of course, the government backs away, the unions could make its life a misery.

It would be a nice change to threaten this for something positive. In the past, it seemed that the unions made life miserable for Labour governments for the sheer hell of it.



Europe's Kurdish Auction

European politicians and consequently European public opinion have so thoroughly taken leave of their senses in respect of the Middle East since last August that they have been incapable of seeing what has been happening in Iraqi Kurdistan for what it is, and are acting to precipitate a renewed war, as Hugh Roberts explains.

François Mitterand and John Major have induced George Bush to reverse his decision to get out of Iraq while the going was good, and to involve the United States in its first protracted military interference in a Third World country since the Vietnam débacle. In the process, they have casually abolished the principle of non-interference in a state's internal affairs, which has been a fundamental pillar of the system of international relations for over a century.

In this they have been following the logic of the New World Order as conceived in Washington, when Washington has been inhibited by a residual realism from following this logic. They are treating the world as their plaything, and they are so ignorant of the real forces they are playing with, and so intent on the poses they are striking, that they do not understand that they are throwing the world into chaos.

Because a central aspect of their behaviour is its capriciousness, it is possible that by the time this article is read they will have moderated their current poses and relapsed into a weasel-worded prudence. In the circumstances, that would be the best that can be hoped for from such pygmies. But it is entirely possible that a spiral of rhetoric and posture will take off, and that the war against Iraq will be renewed, with incalculable consequences. Their pretext for their behaviour is what Saddam Hussein has been doing to the Kurds, which they unanimously describe as 'genocide'.

It is a reckless trivialisation of the term 'genocide' to apply it to the fate of the Kurds. The USA is the last state on earth which is entitled to moralise about the genocidal proclivities of other states. And Europeans are the last people on earth entitled to speak of genocide casually.

Between the 1820s and 1890 American society committed wholesale genocide against the Red Indians and still does not feel bad about it. The genocidal slaughter of one and a half million Armenians was conducted in Turkey in 1915. What the Nazis did to the Jews was genocide on a modern industrial basis and an unequalled scale. Acts of a genocidal nature have occurred elsewhere this century. The Indonesian state, with American and British support, has been committing genocide

in East Timor since the mid-1970s. An estimated 200,000 inhabitants of East Timor, that is, a third of the population, have been killed, and the killing is still going on. But Saddam Hussein has simply been suppressing a rebellion.

Neither the Red Indians nor the Armenians nor the Jews nor the people of East Timor were killed for trying to overthrow the American, Turkish, German or Indonesian states. They were killed for being what they were where they were. The Iraqi state has not been killing Kurds for being Kurds in Iraq, but for being rebels.

The history of every major state in Europe has been punctuated by rebellions. The development of the British and French states in particular have involved the suppression of numerous revolts. In each case, the rebels took their chances, knowing that if they succeeded they would constitute a new state in place of, or in secession from, the old, and that if they failed they would swing for it.

Some of these rebellions expressed a progressive ambition, but many of them were based on regional, feudal, dynastic or tribal interests and loyalties which were being undermined by the development of the state in question. The great Jacobite risings in Scotland in 1715 and 1745 were in the latter category. And every rising in Iraqi

Kurdistan has been in the latter category, including the latest one, whatever democratic trappings its tribal leaders have contrived to give it.

But Europe under American hegemony has ceased to think for itself about the Middle East, and is now hell-bent on behaving even more recklessly than the United States in the aftermath of Operation 'Desert Storm'.

Europe had a bad conscience about the war against Iraq. It had been caught napping by American power-play and did not have it in it to oppose or even resist being implicated in what America was doing, even though what America was doing was inimical to European interests. Only Britain was enthusiastic about the war to destroy Iraq and restore the vicious and imbecilic Al Sabah's to their throne. France was cynical about joining in, the rest sheepish. So when Bush demonstrated that the New World Order had no moral content whatever, it became essential for European governments to retrieve the high-faluting self-righteousness which America had no further use for, and posture as the conscience of the new order, in order to head off the irrefutable charge that they had been made abject donkeys of by Uncle Sam. And so the plight of the Kurds of Iraq, which in the wake of earlier rebellions had never rated more than a passing tut-tut, was brought to the attention of European public opinion with unprecedented vehemence.

It was France which started the ball rolling. French public opinion had initially been far more opposed to the war-mongering than its British counterpart. Mitterand had coped with it by engaging in theatrical gestures designed to create the illusion that France was acting independently of the US and was genuinely seeking a peaceful solution, and by arguing that France had to take part in 'Operation Desert Storm' in order to stake its claim to a say in shaping the post-war Middle East. But France has had virtually no say in shaping what passes for a post-war settlement in the region and has got little in the way of lucrative contracts for its pains, and her behaviour has cost her dear in her former colonies in North Africa, "*feu notre Maghreb*" ("our late Maghreb") as a columnist in *Le Monde* has put it. It was predictable that France would at the first opportunity posture anew as an



Mitterand opens the bidding



independent power at America's expense. And so she seized on America's indifference to the fate of the Kurds and demanded that the Security Council condemn Saddam Hussein's repression.

This embarrassed London more than Washington. The American public was still euphoric at the spectacle of American power rampaging triumphantly around the Gulf, bombing the infrastructure of a medium-sized Third World country back into the 1930s and making mincemeat of the conscript element of its army, and any twinges of concern about the Kurds could have been satisfied by a bit of humanitarian aid and a UN resolution or two. But the British public could not be satisfied with this.

British public opinion has needed more than any other to believe the eyewash about "International Law" and the moral rightness of the war against Iraq, precisely because no real British national interest was being defended and no real British power (as distinct from military prowess) was being exercised. The quixotic reflex in the British psyche needed to be mobilised to the hilt to compensate for the comparative

sluggishness of the merely patriotic reflex. And so it was essential to mispresent the war as a re-run in miniature of a mixture of World Wars I and II, with Kuwait as the "plucky little Belgium" (or Poland) of the Gulf, Iraq as its militaristic Germany and Saddam as its Hitler, evil, mad and bent on world conquest.

But it was equally essential that the war end with the good guys in clover and the bad guy in irons. The spectacle of Saddam serenely suppressing the Shi'ites and the Kurds was insupportable. It meant, as Peregrine Worsthorne observed in the *Sunday Telegraph* on April 7, that "*Saddam has won*". Because the hysterical demonisation of Saddam by the British media could not be undone, his political survival, which is indeed tantamount to political victory, could not be contemplated with equanimity.

It was impossible, given the Rushdie affair, the well-established prejudice against Islamic radicalism and the hostages in Lebanon, to arouse public dismay at the fate of the Shi'ites. But the Kurds, with their lack of religious

fanaticism, their colourful costumes, their endearing rebel traditions and their democratic pretensions, were another matter. They were perfect subjects for a frustrated British ambition to do good in the world and to patronise the oppressed.

But they were only made operative in the role of suitable subjects after Marianne stole her march on John Bull.

Once Paris had made its move in the Security Council, London could only tag along lamely behind or try to recapture the lead by going one better. With John Major encountering an image problem as a result of his failure to crush a rebellion in the Parliamentary Conservative Party, Downing Street was anxious to recover the semblance of authority that war leadership had bestowed on it and could not resign itself to tailing the Elysée. And so Major produced his proposal for an enclave in Iraqi Kurdistan.

To justify the proposal to violate Iraq's sovereignty, the repression of the Kurds began to be referred to as genocide, the one contingency in which the UN Charter allows the principle of non-intervention to be overridden, and the media was encouraged to describe events in these terms. The media responded to the hint with alacrity, and a tidal wave of hysterical sensationalism masquerading as news reporting was unleashed on a punch-drunk public. And when the EC and the UN began to fall in behind Britain's proposal, the media could not wait to congratulate itself on the beneficent influence it had exerted. Even the maverick intelligence of Edward Pearce, whose commentary on the Gulf crisis had hitherto been a model of lucidity in its robust refusal to be impressed by all the Anglo-American self-righteousness, fell at the last, Kurdish, fence.

It has been clear since last August that war on Iraq would most probably either destroy the Ba'athist state or leave Saddam Hussein in power. It has been equally clear that the Ba'athist state is the only thing holding Iraq together, that Iraq would disintegrate if this state was overthrown, that the disintegration of Iraq would create enormous and persistent turmoil in the Middle East, and that the United States would not welcome this prospect. America's Saudi client had a well-known veto on a democratic regime in Iraq (let alone an Iranian take-over of southern Iraq or a Shi'ite-dominated government in Baghdad) and America's Turkish client had an equally well-known veto on an independent Iraqi Kurdistan. It therefore followed that America would either have to hold a defeated Iraq together under prolonged military occupation while it nurtured the elements of a new, post-Ba'athist, "our son-of-a-bitch" brand of dictatorship under its patronage, or that

it would have to stay out of the place and leave it to Saddam.

Since it was equally certain that the last thing it wanted to do was to take prolonged responsibility for governing Iraq, it was predictable that America, having failed to kill Saddam by precision-bombing all his known bunkers, would decide to accept his continued rule as the least of the possible evils until his colleagues eventually get around to dispensing with him. Those in British public life who have been protesting at this, having enthusiastically supported the war, have merely been advertising their own ignorance and gullibility.

The Kurds have grounds for feeling betrayed. The fact that President Bush incited the people of Iraq to rise against their government at a time when his army occupied large tracts of the country encouraged them to suppose that America would lend effective support to the rebellion. The Kurds are by European standards a backward and unsophisticated people who are still largely organised on tribal lines and led mainly by their tribal aristocracies. If Massud Barzani and Jalal Talabani assured them that Uncle Sam and would see them through, they were in no position to question this assessment. But European politicians and pundits have no grounds whatever for talking about an American betrayal. They should have known better, and have only themselves to blame for being duped by American rhetoric.

The immediate effect of Bush's incitement was not to precipitate the Kurdish rebellion, which would have occurred in any case, but to demoralise the government troops garrisoning the larger towns and so enable the rebels to capture them with very little fighting and thereby over-reach themselves.

Previous Kurdish rebellions have been largely confined to the mountains, with the rebels holding the high ground and so able, when the tide turned, to withdraw to the nearest frontier in relatively good order in the face of the slowly advancing government troops. The precipitate expansion of the recent rebellion to the low-lying towns deprived it of the possibility of an orderly retreat. The game had become an unprecedented one for the Kurds, double or quits. The government's counter-attack was not the normal affair of laboriously regaining control of the foothills, but a lightening assault across level ground in the plain. And it was not the tough hillsmen who were in the firing line in the first instance, but that element of the Kurdish population which had been drawn into the towns by the economic development which the Iraqi state has promoted in Kurdistan, urbanised Kurds who have been to

school and acquired professional qualifications and perhaps a smattering of English, but who have never had the chance to develop political capacities of their own, and have therefore been politically dependent on the Iraqi state on the one hand or the tribal leaderships in the hills on the other.

The momentary triumph of the latter was enough to persuade the urban population to declare for the rebellion. But when it became clear that America was not about to overthrow Saddam and that Saddam had plenty of other forces still loyal to him, panic set in on a massive scale. The exodus to Turkey and Iran has involved both rural tribesmen and urban Kurds, but it is the urban Kurds who have been dying like flies, staggering pell-mell towards the mountain passes in suits and high heels.

It is George Bush, not Saddam Hussein, who is responsible for this appalling situation. Saddam has had no choice but to crush the revolt at top speed or go under. But neither Bush's state nor his neck have been in jeopardy and he has always had choices.

Bush called on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam because, having mobilised American opinion for a war of Good against Evil, he did not wish to appear to be endorsing Saddam's political survival. He may have already decided that Saddam would survive and that America would leave him be, in which case he was trying to create a smokescreen for this *realpolitik* with rhetoric which suggested the opposite. Or he may still have been hoping for a palace coup against Saddam to bring an acceptable face of Ba'athism to the fore, and thought that stirring up the Shi'ites and the Kurds was the best way to promote this prospect, in which case he was guilty of the worst kind of wishful thinking, since for as long as it was confronting Shi'ite and Kurdish insurrections the Ba'ath could be counted on to stick together behind Saddam.

Either way, the inevitable rebellions in both southern and northern Iraq were massively aggravated for the benefit of his domestic image by the President of the United States, who has thereby demonstrated the unfitness of America to preside over any kind of world order.

American society has many virtues, and American democracy on its home ground is one of the political wonders of the world. But its characteristic qualities of self-absorption, self-righteousness and a naïve manicheism about the outside world make cynicism, short-sightedness, wishful thinking, ambiguity and recklessness the inevitable hall-marks of America's foreign policy and disqualify America from the 'world leadership' it aspires to. It wants the subjective satisfaction of this role and the power to

get its own way in foreign parts on behalf of American business interests, but it does not want, and cannot undertake, the burden of responsibility for any kind of consistent leadership worthy of the name.

American foreign policy is conducted by a President who either has his eyes on getting re-elected, or on getting his supporters elected in mid-term congressional elections, or who is coming to the end of his second term and is a 'lame-duck'.

Vietnam demonstrated that no President could sacrifice large numbers of American lives in a messy war against a Third World country and get re-elected. Bush's conduct of the war against Iraq has demonstrated that the 'Vietnam syndrome', far from being destroyed, is actually alive and well and determining American military behaviour. Vietnam was a protracted ground war which destroyed a presidency. Protracted ground wars are still ruled out. Or were until Bush finally yielded to European pressure on April 16, and started, like Kennedy in Vietnam, at the thin end of the wedge.

The general character of American behaviour in the world at large either was or should have been known to the political leaders of Europe nine months ago. By going along with the American adventure, they earned their share of the moral obloquy for the appalling damage it has done. In a way, their responsibility is greater. American democracy has just been doing what comes naturally, being itself. European democracy has been disgracing itself.

John Major's proposal for an enclave in Iraqi Kurdistan, if fully realised, will begin the dismemberment of the Iraqi state. It will undermine the authority of the Iraqi government in the eyes of the Iraqi people as a whole and thereby start the slide towards the disintegration of Iraq. He may have made this proposal in the expectation that nothing would come of it, that he could rely on the USSR or China vetoing it in the Security Council. In that case, Britain would have outbid both France and the United States in the Kurdish Moral High Ground rhetorical auction and everything else would have remained as it was before Mitterand's made his modest opening bid.

But, if this was his calculation, he miscalculated. Whether intentionally or unintentionally he upped the bidding in a dramatic way and obliged the rest of Europe's heads of state to raise their own bids or drop out and put themselves in bad odour with their respective public opinions. The proposal to try Saddam for war crimes was revived by Germany's Genscher, presumably on the assumption that nothing will come of it because Saddam will not make himself

available. But such assumptions are dangerous when the world is in flux, and the proposals predicated upon them simply add to the hysteria, and permit worse proposals to be taken seriously.

And so a snowball of humbug grew, and now it has crossed the Atlantic. Bush, already under pressure from domestic critics, has felt that he had to regain the initiative ("whose goddamn World Order is this anyway?") and so he has allowed himself to be browbeaten out of his "not our problem" stance.

And so it is that American, British and French troops are now installing themselves in Iraqi Kurdistan, in theory to establish "safe havens" or "safe environments" to which the Kurds on the mountainsides may be persuaded to return. With well over a million refugees, the camps being set up will have to function only as transit camps for refugees on their way back to Arbil, Kirkuk, etc. But the refugees will be unwilling to leave the safety of the camps for the uncertainties of the towns now under Saddam's control. They will demand guarantees of their future safety before leaving to make way for fresh batches of refugees from the mountains.

Who will provide these guarantees? Saddam has been trying to provide his own since regaining military control of the urban centres, but the Allies have been doing everything in their power to discredit these guarantees. Baghdad's announcement that it was embarking on a general programme of political reform, involving a return to pluralism, has been dismissed in the West, despite the fact that these reforms have already begun to take effect, as is evident from the amount of open criticism of the authorities now appearing in the Baghdad newspapers. And the fact that Saddam has been negotiating with the Kurdish leaders has been kept out of the news.

On *Today in Parliament* on Wednesday April 17 Ann Clwyd MP, who had just returned from Kurdistan, stated that Massud Barzani had told her that Saddam had made him an interesting offer. On *Yesterday in Parliament* (the repeat broadcast of the same programme) the following morning, this statement by Ann Clwyd had been edited out. The fact that Jalal Talabani has also been engaged in negotiations with Saddam has been even more successfully kept out of the news. The Kurds are being encouraged to treat Saddam's attempts to establish a post-rebellion *modus vivendi* as beneath consideration, when they are in fact their best bet by a long way. And Western public opinion is being lied to at full blast, and made to believe that Saddam is a genocidal maniac.

In addition, the fact that the Iraqi government has been involved in serious and detailed negotiations with the UN

secretariat about the provision of UN-run humanitarian centres throughout the country, while reported, very discretely, in the press, has been largely ignored in the broadcast media. The 21-point agreement was signed by the new Iraqi foreign minister Ahmed Hussein and the UN's representative Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan on April 18. This agreement addresses the humanitarian problem seriously and expresses both Baghdad's willingness to cooperate with the UN and the UN's willingness to respect Iraq's sovereignty.

It is this which the precipitate despatch of Allied troops has been deliberately upstaging. There is a battle going on between the Allied governments and the UN Secretariat. Perez de Cuellar has been under pressure



from many countries to reassert the role of the Secretariat on behalf of the principle of the sovereignty of UN member states. London and Washington do not want the UN Secretariat to regain an independent role and they have no intention of treating the sovereignty of Iraq with anything other than contempt.

If the Allies succeed in sabotaging Baghdad's efforts to provide effective guarantees to the refugees, they will have to furnish their own guarantees. There are only two ways they can do this. They can either devise a long term autonomy plan of their own which suits Barzani and Talabani and impose it on Baghdad under renewed duress, or they can finally resume the march on Baghdad and try to overthrow Saddam by force.

If they do neither of these things, they will simply have to withdraw having achieved nothing, except immeasurably complicate the problem of a how a post-rebellion settlement might be negotiated by the Kurdish leaders and Baghdad. They will have created a permanent Kurdish refugee problem, analogous to the permanent Palestinian refugee

problem in Lebanon and Jordan. They will have virtually guaranteed the protracted instability of the Iraqi state and the insecurity of its neighbours, and the chronic misery of the Iraqi Kurds. And they will have taught the Kurds to concentrate their efforts on mobilising world opinion instead of coming to terms with the Iraqi nation-state, and will have thereby sown the seeds of a development of Kurdish terrorism, like Palestinian and Armenian terrorism, on the international stage.

If they impose an autonomy plan on Baghdad, they will become a necessary element in the functioning of the Iraqi state. The internal sovereignty of the state will have been permanently compromised. This development will either be the last nail in Saddam's coffin, or it will be accepted by him and his colleagues on the calculation that they will sooner or later recover their freedom of action and so the ability to repudiate it. If they repudiate it, this will take one of two forms. Either they will prevail on Barzani and Talabani to face realities when the Allied troops depart, and negotiate the agreement that the Allies are preventing from being negotiated now. Or they will take a chance and send in the Republican Guards to demolish the 'safe havens' and re-establish Iraqi sovereignty over the territory and people in question by force.

If Bush and Major renew the march on Baghdad, and kill Saddam Hussein, they will either have to subject Iraq to protracted Allied occupation, or allow it to fall apart. Either way, there will be hell to pay.

Major's initiative was welcomed by Conservative MPs as proof of their leader's decisiveness and the solution of his image problem. It was, in fact, a gift to a competent Labour Opposition, an open goal. If Labour was capable of thinking seriously about foreign affairs, it would have destroyed Major's credibility in a fierce onslaught on his reckless proposal. But Labour is incapable of thinking about the world in general and the Middle East in particular, and endorsed Major's folly.

There used to be a Middle East sub-committee of the Labour Party's International Committee in Walworth Road. It was abolished in 1983, shortly after Neil Kinnock became leader. Since then Labour has depended on the understandings of others in respect of the Middle East. It has made its selection between rival understandings on the basis of the current power of the rivals in question. No power can rival Uncle Sam's these days. And so Labour jumped on the New World Order merry-go-round last August and dare not get off. And all it can say, as the pile of corpses and debris mounts, is "faster, faster!".

Eric Heffer speaks

Eric Heffer talks about why the Labour Party ended up choosing someone like Kinnock to lead it, and airs his opinions on other issues.

L&TUR How do you explain the fact that the Labour Party has ended up with someone like Neil Kinnock running it?

E.H. The first thing is that when Thatcher came into office it was a great shock to the party. She did not merely do what Heath had done, she actually did begin to overturn and make inroads into the Welfare State and the National Health Service. This had never been done before: the undermining and destroying of the positive things that had been done by the Labour party in the 1945-51 years. Up to then, these things had been more or less accepted by the Conservative party, under Macmillan in particular. Yet she referred to Macmillan's years as "creeping socialism". She wanted to destroy that, and she set out to destroy it. That was a traumatic experience for the Labour party membership.

We had hoped that we could win in 1983, but of course it did not work out. Nice though the fellow leading the party was, and nice though the pictures were which showed him walking on Hampstead Heath with his white hair, his stick and his slight limp, the impression was somehow given that the Labour party was decrepit, and falling to pieces.

Then there was the confusion created by the breaking away of the SDP, which managed to give the impression that it was the old Labour party, the real Labour party. These things, together with the "Falklands factor", contributed to the defeat in 1983. And generally, I think, the party was in a state of trauma, so they wanted to skip a generation and elect a younger leader. They wanted someone of the centre-left, not of the right, who, with a right-wing deputy, could be a compromise.

But there was more trauma to come. After the leadership election Mrs Thatcher continued in the same way. But instead of the leadership exposing her and fighting every inch of the way on a socialist programme for what they really believed in, they started the "me too-ism". Instead of fighting on the socialist programme as they had found it - and you could not really expect more than that - they said, "We are the same as you are. We accept your agenda".

That had a traumatic effect. And by that

time the trade union leaderships also were giving in to the legislation that the Tories were bringing in. It was an absolute cock-up in every way.

L&TUR Do you put that down essentially to Kinnock and his politics?

E.H. I think Kinnock had a dramatic effect on it. Contrary to a lot of people, I believe in the role of the individual in history. Mrs Thatcher gave a decisive lead to capitalism. Without her it might never have been as it is today. Without Kinnock, in my opinion, the party would not have been as it is today. He was able to do things that other leaders couldn't get away with. And, of course, he did. He transformed our policies. He dished unilateral nuclear disarmament. He has got rid of the idea of public ownership - not that I agree entirely with the idea of public ownership as it was in the past. But at least it was public ownership, and we could have improved it. But Kinnock has got rid of it. It does not mean a thing any more. We have accepted the Tory policies with relation to the unions. They sometimes say things about union policy which are far worse than what Barbara Castle ever said, and is, in fact, in line with Tory policy. So, yes, Kinnock has played a key role in the transformation of the party. And then he went and did precisely what some of us said would be disastrous. Instead of dealing with the ultra-left, and with Militant in particular, in our own way - fighting them at local level, having people stand against them and organise against them - he carried out a witch-hunt. This went right through the country. And the result is that the

Tories and the Liberals are able to use the witch-hunt to claim that Labour is divided. Yes, Kinnock is basically responsible for what has happened.

L&TUR What do you put it down to?

E.H. I think it is true to say that he is still involved in student politics. He surrounds himself with a team of people, particularly the younger ones, who were all involved in student politics. I remember that when Neil first came into the House of Commons I was very friendly with him, and went out of my way to help him. He was a young man who I thought had a great future - he certainly had, but it wasn't quite the future I anticipated. That went slightly wrong!

I can remember a meeting of the 'Right to Work' campaign organised by the Socialist Workers' Party. They organised quite a few marches, and on one occasion they marched from somewhere in the North down to London, and the final meeting they had was in one of the committee rooms of the House of Commons. Neil was there, and I was there and other Tribunites were there, and the audience was shouting for a general strike. When I got up to speak I said that the calls for a general strike were a load of rubbish, and that it was ridiculous for students, and others, to chant 'General Strike!' When Neil got up he said he agreed with them about a general strike, and I felt I was being marginalised, even though most of the lads agreed with me. It was interesting, and I remembered that. I also remember him making a speech in South Wales calling for nationalisation without compensation. I never, ever argued that. I always said there should be some compensation for some people, minimal, but we do have an obligation. It is most interesting that he was really on the left, even, in a sense, on the ultra left. Then, of course, he began to move, and it indicated to me that he wasn't rooted in anything. You must have roots - real roots in the movement. And having roots in the student movement is not quite the same thing. I fear that Kinnock has never really changed.

L&TUR Do you see any possibility of an alternative to Kinnock?

E.H. I suppose it is too late now, because we are too close to a general election. But I would have settled for



Neil Kinnock

someone on the right, one of the younger people, as long as they had shaped better and had more roots in the movement - even though they wouldn't be my personal cup of tea. But you have to 'live and let live' if you want to win an election, and the beginning of any stage of our future development is winning an election.

L&TUR You are one of the few people who has been active in politics since the Forties and Fifties. Obviously as the Bevin Society, we would like to know what you think of Bevin and the attitudes that are taken towards him.

E.H. Well, Bevin was undoubtedly a great figure within the Labour movement and he did create the biggest union within the Labour movement. It has to be remembered, of course, that he began as a Left-winger and was associated with Left-wing groups of all kinds. He was a very considerable figure. The great tragedy was of course that we had a leader who was a pacifist, Lansbury, who believed that all you had to do was talk to Hitler and Mussolini and they wouldn't pursue their imperialist and fascist aims. Well of course he was wrong, but the movement had had a very strong pacifist streak in it ever since the first World War and had more or less repudiated violence in every way. But it was clear that the German rearmament under Hitler could no longer continue, and parts of the left felt that as strongly as people on the right. In fact some people on the right were also pacifist!

Of course what Bevin did was pretty brutal, but unfortunately looking back on it if I had been around and active in the movement I would have supported him. I would have voted for him at conference because I think he was right and that Lansbury, though a wonderful man and a great socialist, was wrong. And if he was wrong then that has to be said. It is later that I would have fallen out with Bevin, after the war, on trade union matters. I have always believed that workers should have the right to strike even against a Labour government. It is a fundamental right.

I was also influenced by the Israel situation after the war. We all felt guilty about what happened to the Jews after the war. And I supported very much the promotion and creation of the state of Israel after the war.

L&TUR Do you think he was wrong about Israel?

E.H. It is easy to say with hindsight, but there should have been provision for a Palestinian state and we

shouldn't have allowed the Israelis to carry out their terrorist attacks on the Palestinian people in the way they did. Yes I think he was wrong. I said so at the time because I nearly volunteered to go and fight for Israel, it was only because I had just got married and it wouldn't have been fair to my wife, that I didn't go. But we felt a great deal of not personal, but collective guilt after they had opened up the camps at Dachau and elsewhere.

L&TUR It is said in Bevin's defence that he was not supportive of Israel because he feared an even worse repetition against the Jews in the middle of the Arab world.



E.H. Well he may well have been right because it was a very complicated situation and Crossman and the others had come back with a policy report and they thought they were more important than they really were.

L&TUR The 1945 Government was the highlight of that period. What momentum was lost that led to so many years of Tory rule?

E.H. I think it was the Morrisonian concept afterwards of consolidation. I think the idea of consolidating after three and a half or four years of good work was a mistake. We should have had a rolling programme and continued to fight. Because we did actually win the biggest vote ever won in this country in 1950. It was because of the electoral system that we only just scraped into power.

L&TUR What are your views on the electoral system now?

E.H. Well I have always supported that system because it enabled us to do the things we did but I think that now there may have to be some modification because the idea of having a minority Tory government for ten years is simply appalling.

L&TUR What system do you think could replace first by the post?

E.H. Well I think that first past the post should remain throughout the country but I think that there has to be stricter control over the sizes of the electorate. And I think that a certain percentage of votes could be cast on a PR basis. We cannot have a position which is like it is now.

L&TUR Do you think that the present electoral system works to the disadvantage of women and ethnic minorities?

E.H. I think that the parties themselves discriminate more than the system itself does. The parties should select more women and ethnic minority candidates. The problem is that a quota system causes its own problems.

L&TUR Why do you think they don't select more women and people from ethnic minorities? Would you put it down to prejudice?

E.H. I think it is a historical thing, though there is a certain amount of prejudice against women in particular.

L&TUR One of the issues that we are particularly concerned with is the Irish situation. As a Liverpool MP you obviously have some feeling for the Orange and Green conflict. What are your thoughts on the Northern Ireland situation?

E.H. I have a real feel for the Orange/Green conflict. I married into a Liverpool Irish family which is half Catholic and half Protestant, so I learned about it fairly early on. When I stood for the council and got involved in Labour politics I found people on both sides of the fence in Labour politics in quite high positions. I noticed first that within the council there wasn't too much of a problem at least in my ward. But I remember canvassing in the parliamentary seat and going to the door of a house I knew was not likely to be one of ours because there was a brass statue of King Billy in the window. An old lady came to the door in her shawls and petticoats and I introduced myself as the Labour Party candidate. "I don't vote papist" she said. "I'm not a papist" I said, "I'm asking you to vote Labour". "That's what I mean", she said "I don't

vote papist". The rest of the area was the same then, protestant to the core. But that has all changed now and it's a solid Labour area. It has all broken down and people vote on the basis of their class attitudes, not their religious attitudes, and that is excellent. I have to admit that I have always been a republican. I was a republican long before I went to Liverpool. My Dad taught me about republicanism, although he was a British soldier. He was brought up in the Labour movement and had a real sympathy for a united Ireland and for figures like Connolly and the great Irish trade unionists like Larkin. To him they were great heroes, and he taught me all about them - on his knee, actually. But the more you get involved, and the more you know, the more you realise how complicated it is. I was fascinated to read about the debates of the Workers' League, one of which was a debate between Connolly and William Walker. And then, of course, I learned about Harry Midgely and read a biography of him. All the unionists were not right wing, were not capitalists by any means, but were real working class.

L&TUR *Do you think there are a lot of people in the movement who do not have such a feel for the Irish situation and jump to conclusions very quickly?*

E.H. I'm afraid some do. Some don't really understand it at all but just get up and mouth policies which they don't really understand. I have argued with them over the years that it is not quite as simple as that; it is more complicated.

L&TUR *You have been very busy with your writing since your illness. Could you describe some of the work you have been doing?*

E.H. I have written quite a number of articles. There was one about the Labour party conference, which was pretty strong; also one about the future of Europe. My memoirs are going to be published, I hope, in September. Then there is *Why I am a Christian*, which will be published by Hodder & Stoughton in September or October. This attempts to answer many of the questions on religion which I have tended to dodge. I wasn't religious from the age of 16 or 17 until I went to Israel, where I had a certain religious experience and went back to the Church, though I had never really left it. I often went into a church during that time and sometimes went to Midnight Mass and Mass on a Sunday. After writing that book, I realised that there was a great debate going on about the future of socialism. Mrs Thatcher and the Tories were claiming that it had all collapsed

through them. But she wasn't the only one. The Communist Party in this country contributed towards it: people like Martin Jacques, among others, so I thought I'd better do something about that and I wrote a thirteen-chapter book called *Has Socialism a future?* It is with the publishers at the moment. After I had written that, I decided I was sick and tired of what the Labour party had done about the Gulf situation and I have written a book about that which is in the last stages of being typed.

L&TUR *Were you shocked by Fred Halliday's position?*

E.H. I was, because Fred Halliday is a friend of mine. He was a member of my Middle East committee, and a very good member. Whenever we wanted a paper about the Middle East, particularly about Iran or Iraq, he knew a hell of a lot about it; he was an expert. I was really shocked, yes.

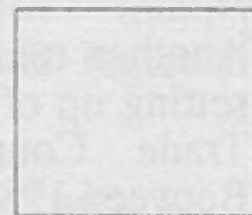
L&TUR *Why do you think he took up that position?*

E.H. It surprised me, because he understands the situation as well as Noam Chomsky understands it. Indeed, he was that sort of critic in his books on the cold war and the US. These were absolutely wonderful. I really don't

know the answer. He is obviously very upset about it, because his reaction to those who wrote about it, particularly to young Cockburn, was very nasty. I have dealt with some of his arguments in my book - as a friend, as an old friend.

L&TUR *Are there any other things you would like to say?*

E.H. I would like to make a comment about your paper. I am very impressed with it. I know that the politics of the paper is not entirely the same as my own. We had always regarded it as a somewhat right-wing paper - not that I had ever read it. No one had ever drawn it to my attention. But since you gave me back copies, and I have had a chance to read it, I think it is an excellent paper. All grist to your mill. Carry on. You are doing a good job. I am sure I won't agree with everything you say, but that doesn't matter. The essence of my socialism is libertarian socialism. I believe in freedom of speech and freedom of thought. Socialism to me is the right to disagree, as Rosa Luxemburg said.



Unions and Co-ops in Ireland

Pat Murphy describes the progress of co-operatives in the Republic of Ireland. The article is based on his submission to a conference in Madrid in October 1990 on *Self-Employment in the European Community*.

The Trade Union Movement in Ireland sees self-employment exclusively in terms of worker co-ops.

Historically, the constitution of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and its predecessors were committed to the development of co-operatives. But it was a commitment which remained unfulfilled until recently.

The worker co-op movement was virtually non-existent before 1980. Apart from the credit unions which developed in the 1960s, the only co-operatives in Ireland were agricultural co-ops owned by the farmers. These engaged in processing milk, meat, grain etc. and date from the turn of the century.

The rapid development of worker co-ops,

ie. co-ops owned and democratically controlled by the people who work in them, rose from a handful in 1980 to 70 in 1987. Subsequently this number dropped back to 50. But between them they still employ over 400 people, half of that number part-time. The growth in numbers coincided with a dramatic climb in unemployment from 88,593 to 250,187 between 1980 and 1987. A contributory factor to the increase in numbers of worker co-ops was a government sponsored Community Enterprise Programme. This scheme provided financial incentives towards administration and labour costs for small business, including co-operatives.

The small number of Phoenix co-ops employing significant numbers of people date from the 1970s. They were started up by workers in conventional

firms which had closed down. Their Trade Unions became involved with them in reestablishing the business in a scaled down form. Many of the worker co-ops set up in the 1980s were job creation projects by unemployed workers. A lesser number were 'alternative' co-ops started up to meet social needs or more congenial work structures.

Although predisposed in favour of co-operatives, the unions had not planned to become involved in promoting them. However, in 1984 the Executive Council of the ICTU decided to review developments in this area. A working group was appointed. Its report in 1985 was very positive. Worker co-ops were making a valuable though limited contribution to job creation and were a development of the concept of industrial democracy. In a policy document in 1988 the ICTU called for the establishment of a central support organisation for worker co-operatives. In 1984 the Network of Worker Co-operatives was founded. It is the voice of individual co-ops and has close relations with the ICTU.

Another relevant development was the setting up of Unemployment Centres by Trade Councils and local groups. Between 1986 and 1989 14 of these were established around the country. These provided advice on social welfare entitlements, access to local authority housing, etc. Recreational activities are organised and education courses, including literacy, are also provided. Some of the Centres engage in job creation projects based on worker co-ops, others just provide advice. The Centres are affiliated to the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, a campaigning organisation.

The first concrete response by the Irish Trade Union Movement to the growing number of redundancies and high unemployment amongst its members was the setting up of a Trust Fund by the second largest union in the Republic, the Federated Workers' Unions of Ireland.

The Fund was established to provide services for the unemployed and to support job creation projects based on worker co-ops. It was funded through a 10p per week levy on its 50,000 members for a three year period.

The most notable feature of the Trust's work is its Loan Fund which provides long term low interest loans to worker co-ops. To date, £136,000 has been lent to 15 projects. It has also financially aided Unemployment Centres, the Network of Worker Co-ops, the

Northern Ireland Co-operative Development Agency etc. The Trust has also been active at National and EEC level in lobbying for changes in the laws governing the registration and operation of co-operatives. There is no Irish legislation on co-operatives. Most co-ops are registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts passed by the British Parliament in the last century. *[British laws remain valid in the Republic of Ireland unless replaced by subsequent Irish legislation. Ed.]*

This year the Federated Workers' Unions of Ireland amalgamated with the largest trade union in Ireland, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, to form the SIPTU, the Services Industrial Professional Trade Union, with a membership in excess of 200,000. The Trust is being incorporated into the new body as the Irish Trade Union Trust and is being given additional resources.

In 1987, the Irish Republic faced an acute financial crisis. The National Debt had increased from £10.1 billion in 1981 to £24.6 billion in 1988. Government borrowing to meet its expenditure reached 14.9% of GNP in 1986. Against that background the ICTU entered into a three year agreement with the Government on a Programme for National Recovery, which was endorsed by the employers organisation FIE. In return for pay moderation, the government agreed to changes in industrial policy and other job creation measures, including a co-operative development council to promote worker

co-ops and to provide for their needs. This work is to be carried out by the CDU, Co-operative Development Unit, within the state training agency FAS. It was given a budget of £1,200,000 on a two year basis.

The Programme for National Recovery ended in December 1990. The National Debt has been stabilised. Government borrowing as a percentage of GNP has fallen to 3.9% in 1988. The Government has acknowledged that the PNR was a major factor in this achievement and is enthusiastic to negotiate another programme. The employment targets set in the PNR have been met, but the net increase in jobs is much smaller due to continuous job shedding by Irish industry. Workers and trade unions have criticised the failure of the Programme to provide more jobs. Whilst wage restraint has resulted in low rates of inflation, it has also boosted the profits of many companies. There has been an unwillingness by employers to reinvest profits in job creation.

On the other hand, the trade union movement has shown a sustained pragmatic commitment to establishing a worker co-op sector in the Irish economy. Were such a movement to become self-sustaining, it would change the perceptions of a lot of trade unionists towards centralised wage bargaining. It is likely that a new programme will be negotiated in the Autumn. How it deals with these criticisms will be a big factor in its acceptance or rejection by workers.

Labour's Education Policy - Aiming Wide

Christopher Winch argues that it is necessary to pay teachers more and to get parents more involved, rather than subjecting everything to dubious experts.

Education policy is said to be Labour's 'Big Idea'. Will Labour find the vision and idealism that will make a Labour government more than managers of an education system inherited from the Tories? **Aiming High**, Labour's policy proposals for education, gives us a chance to see whether or not Labour does have a 'big idea' for education.

A Labour government will raise standards, increase the number of young people gaining educational qualifications and increase the participation rate in higher education. It will also increase the provision of nursery education and introduce teacher appraisal.

It has to be said that Labour's policy is a great disappointment. Why? The main reason is that there has been no serious attempt to diagnose the weaknesses of British education and no attempt to come to terms with the legacy of Thatcher's reforms in education. These reforms have left education with many of the problems that plagued it before; low regard for education by large numbers of people and destructive experimentation with the curriculum and methods of teaching and learning by some influential education 'experts'.

These two weaknesses feed off each other. Because education is not valued, the carcass is left to the 'experts' to pick

over. Because the carcass is given over to the educational vultures, the public tends not to take education too seriously. One important and disastrous result of the Tory innovations is that these vultures are now to be found in even more influential positions that they were before, having effortlessly infiltrated the curriculum working parties and the National Curriculum Council, the statutory body which oversees the National Curriculum.

This happened because the Tories were in too much of a hurry to put their reforms into place and did not pay enough attention to the detailed implementation of their policies. At least, however, they were aware of a problem. Labour does not seem to be. And because it isn't, the policies they put forward bid fair to lower rather than to raise standards. Nursery education is irrelevant to raising standards. If anything, evidence suggests that young children learn less in nurseries than they do at home. Some of the money to be spent on nursery education would be better spent helping parents to provide knowledge and skills to their children and in playgroups. Of course, nursery education is a good vote-winner, because it holds out the promise of a child minding service. But that is a consideration quite irrelevant to the raising of educational standards.

Labour proposes another means for raising standards: an independent Education Standards Council staffed by experts. If these experts are the wrong ones (quite likely), they will then have free reign to impose their fads throughout the system without interference and as a result, a decline in standards will follow. Teacher appraisal will accelerate the process. The experts who appraise teachers will apply the criteria for good practice set by the Education Standards Council and ensure that if teachers wish to prosper in the profession, they can best do so by lowering the educational standards of their pupils according to whatever theory happens to be fashionable at the moment. The sentimental world-view of the dubious educational experts inclines them to be natural supporters of the Labour party, which stands in danger of succumbing to their influence.

Labour pays lip service to the importance of vocational and technical education, but says nothing about what they will do with the City Technology College programme. They seem to be unaware that technical education needs support and prestige if it is to capture the public imagination and that this may mean that comprehensive schools are not the only route through secondary education. They also fail to deal with

the issue of enhancing teachers' prestige. In a society like ours, this means paying them substantially more than they currently get. It also means restoring to them the will to teach, to be authoritative and not to be ashamed of it. There is no sign that Labour's educational politicians recognise this.

Most pathetic of all the proposals is that of a 'contract' between parents and schools to ensure that parents support the efforts of the schools in educating their children. A contract which cannot be enforced is nothing more than a statement of good intention. Good intentions and commitment are what is needed from parents in order for them to

help their children to succeed. That will only come if more working people are brought to recognise that state education has something worthwhile to offer their children. On the showing of **Aiming High**, there is no evidence that Labour is capable of doing that.

The document is further alarming evidence that the Labour Party has yet to grasp that it needs to think educational policy through carefully, to pay attention to detail, to recognise past mistakes and to make a break from the illusion about comprehensive education which it inherited in the 1950s and 1960s and which now look bankrupt.

A perfect model of a modern manufacturer?

Martin Dolphin looks at the Labour Party policy statement on manufacturing.

If parties won elections on the basis of the number of glossy policy statements which they produced the Labour Party would be home and dry. Every week, on every conceivable aspect of policy, the Labour Party produces statements. I sometimes have the impression that they are produced for the sake of the media because if they were not produced the media would be able to say that it was unclear what Labour's policies were. Now if they cannot see Labour's policies they have no one but themselves to blame. I cannot see the famous man in the street reading these documents. He might buy one with every intention of reading it but I doubt if he would get past the first page.

One of the latest in Labour's sequence of policy statements is one with the title **Modern manufacturing strength**. It is wonderfully laid out in a landscape A4 page with very big margins and is 24 pages long. This is its main problem because it could say what it wants to say in two pages. Let me summarise what I think it says. The Conservatives are guilty of macro-economic mismanagement. This is not the only cause of their problems. The root cause of the Conservative failure has been the absence of a long term and coherent policy for industry - in short an industrial policy. The choice is not between a command economy and a pure market economy but for a vigorous and supportive partnership between government and industry. Labour's industrial policy will have three main pillars. 1) It will modernise the manufacturing base, 2) the policy will be long term and 3) government and industry will work together to achieve

specific objectives which will cover transport and communications infrastructures and also training, technology, investment and regionally balanced growth.

Labour's central strategy will be to combine stability in macro-economic policy with a supply side policy to boost long term investment. (p.7) Industries and individuals will be encouraged to invest by making their investments allowable for tax. Such methods are widely used by the present Conservative government to encourage investment. There is much general talk about how takeovers will have to be shown to be in the public interest but it is quite unclear how any takeover would be stopped. An institution with the name National Investment Bank will be set-up which will have two main functions 1) to bridge the gap for long term funding for small and medium sized companies and 2) to help to mobilise private capital for publicly led long term investment projects in the country's infrastructure. Here it makes an important point: *"Perhaps the most debilitating problem faced by any public company is uncertainty as to the attitude of its main investors. This in turn prompts the company to look to short term profits to keep up its share value sometimes at a sacrifice of long term competitiveness."*

In the chapter on Training it is said that the imperative is to move from low value mass production to high value-added products. I have problems with this. I don't really know what it means. The economies of Japan and South Korea thrive on the basis of

reliable low value mass production. The production of computer chips is not necessarily a high value activity. The current most popular chip is probably the Intel 386. It is not produced in Britain for the simple reason that the British Management / Worker structure could not be relied on to produce it to the required level of quality. Yet is it precisely such activities that we should be able to be engaged in. Why should a small amount of high value-added production be preferable to mass low value-added production. The document goes on to present the four main components of Labour's approach to training 1) The government's YTS scheme will be replaced with a new entitlement to learn for all 16-19 year olds. 2) A legal obligation on all employers to train is proposed which is defined by a duty to spend at least 0.5% of their pay roll on training, with the shortfall being paid as a contribution to the national training effort. I like the idea of more formal training at work and schemes like this do seem to be successful in other countries.

The chapter titled **An innovative economy** proposes to encourage investment research and development by giving an additional 25% tax credit in the year in which the investment is made. This is generous and is equivalent to a 175% tax allowance at the current corporation tax rate of 33%. In addition it is proposed to set up Technology Trusts which will disseminate new technology through the society. The picture is conjured up of managers in small businesses wandering in to the nearby university to discuss their problems with the academics. William Morris would have been impressed. (These academics currently charge £700 a day for their services).

The chapter on regional policy basically says that there will be one unlike under the Tories when there was not one. The regional policy will be a third generation regional policy. First generation policies involved investments in infrastructure and heavy industry, second generation policies involved investment support for incoming firms, third

generation policies means upgrading the indigenous skills and technological capabilities of each region. (What does this mean?) Having introduced the idea of regional policy the document then goes on at length about local people making local decisions about local needs. Heaven forbid that there should be any central direction of this regional policy.

In conclusion I like the document because it states fairly unambiguously that governments should be actively involved in industrial policy. With the exception of the proposals on training and tax credits it is vague on the form of industrial policies. The section on regional policy is particularly vague. Finally for a policy statement on "Modern manufacturing strength", it is amazing that there is not a single reference to the role of the Trade Union Movement. Clearly they are not seen to have any.

New Union - Stage II

The COHSE / NALGO / NUPE merger.

In **L&TUR** No. 19, (September - October 1990) we reviewed the first joint report of the COHSE, NALGO and NUPE National executives, which was submitted to and adopted by the 1990 Annual Conference of the three unions. The second joint report, **A framework for a new union**, has recently been published and this will be submitted to the unions' 1991 Annual Conferences. The report is the result of further discussion between the unions and consultation with their members. Assuming that the report is adopted, discussion between the unions will continue and proposals for further consultations with members will be published. The final decision on all the key elements of the New Union will be taken by the 1992 Conferences. The members of the unions will be balloted in November 1992 and, assuming a successful vote, the New Union will come into being in February or March 1993.

The report is an impressive piece of work. It is well argued and clearly written. The core issues, addressed in some detail in the report for the first time, are the New Unions' service groups, local organisation and regional organisation. These deal with questions of accountability, participation and democracy and describe how the structures of the New Union can be designed so as to ensure that the guiding

principles of a membership-centred union is achieved. The report recognises the problems involved in creating the right type of structures to enable maximum membership involvement and is not afraid to admit that at this stage it does not have all the answers. In this sense it is an honest report. There are, however, aspects of the report that are slightly ambiguous and which would benefit from a little clarification.

There is an interesting section on equal opportunities within the New Union. On the exercise of power the report says *"Developing equal opportunities entails making changes in the internal distribution of power and influence within the unions, if disadvantaged members and their representatives are able to exercise that power to effect change in the external environment of work, public policy, attitudes, education, leisure and so on."* (Paragraph 5.20) For women members these changes mean *"careful examination of the New Union's employment policies with a programme of positive action for the recruitment, retention, promotion and training of women staff (including the provision of opportunities for job-sharing and part-time work)"*. This will be music to the ears of women members, and also black members, conscious as they are of the predominance of white males among the senior officers (Assistant General Secretary upwards) of the three unions. However, women are unlikely to rise to the top during the remaining years of the 20th century, given the age of most of the present incumbents.

The section on political organisation and political funds updates the proposals set out in the first joint report. It recognises the two traditions of political independence (in NALGO) and political affiliation (in COHSE and NUPE) and proposes the maintenance of the current position whereby there are two funds, a General Political Fund and an Affiliated Political Fund. This should last at least until ballots have to be held (in 1995) under existing trade union law to determine whether the funds should continue in existence. In NALGO's case, there will continue to be a General Political Fund, to which members would subscribe, unless they chose to opt out. In the case of COHSE and NUPE, members who wish to will subscribe to the Affiliated Political Fund. After the merger, however, members of the New Union will have the right to subscribe to both funds if they so wish, or to opt out altogether, as will be their right under the law. This is the only sensible and fair method of resolving the difficulties and the report is clear in its recognition of this.

Winning the support of the members for the merger is not a foregone conclusion. There are, it appears, noises of discontent among sections of the unions' members. In recognition of this the report says that campaigning among the members of the three unions will need to be given priority. The report sets out powerful arguments to support the merger. It will take tremendous powers of persuasion to convince the members that it is in their best interests to vote in favour when the ballot is held.

New World Orders For Old

Ben Cosin takes issue with the view we have expressed of the New World Order and its war against Iraq.

Serious consideration of the immediate origins of the present crisis begins with an assessment of the Iraqi-Kuwait relation. It is argued that the character of the Iraqi regime, far from being an expression of barbarism, the brutal psychology of Saddam Hussein or peculiarly Arab problems, is a result of the nature of Iraqi society and its relations with the state. Iraq is not a nation-state, and is therefore difficult to govern. The conflict between Ba'athist ideology and the fractured social reality of Iraqi society pulls the Iraqi state towards autocracy, or at any rate towards a monarchical form of government. Hence the cult of Saddam Hussein is functional (Hugh Roberts, *L&TUR* No. 19, September - October 1990, page 13).

On the other hand the general reality of society in the Middle East has, we are told, (*L&TUR* No. 19, page 2), no room for non-national states such as Kuwait (and the other Emirates). As in the case of Europe, the nation-states will have their way with such unnatural entities - and Saddam's annexation of Kuwait is an example of such a restoration or achievement of the natural, national state, order which is developing in the Middle East - as it did in Europe - after the colonial regimes of the Ottoman Empire and the post-Versailles Anglo-French and American imperia. (In passing I note that a lot of this sorting out in Eastern Europe started only in the 1878-1913 period

and, to judge by the experience of Yugoslavia, Transylvania and Bulgaria, still has some way to go.)

To sum up, the problems of the misalignment between the Iraqi state and society, which have logically produced an indubitably harsh, brutal and arbitrary regime, and more generally the misalignment between nations and states in the Middle East, are to be solved by an increase in the non-national character of Iraqi society by the annexation of the 'nineteenth governorate'.... This is a poor bet. The Saddamite road, based on a repression of national and social realities, is a very long way round to the development of a system of nation-states or of multi-national states in the Middle East.

It may be argued that in spite of its brutality, Saddam's regime promises a defence of the Third World against US imperialism which is now at least as dominant as it has ever been. Yet the above analysis of Iraqi politics serves as a direct contradiction of such an argument.

Saddam has even been compared by some [*not by the L&TUR - Ed.*] to George II, a monarch who presided over the establishment and development of representative government and opened the path to democratic development, at the same time encouraging autonomous judicial activity and sanctioning secular development of society as well as of the

state. Almost the precise opposite is true of Saddam's regime: government has become less and less representative, the preconditions of autonomous law and democratic government are less and less in evidence, and even before Saddam decided to try to co-opt Islam and Islamism to counter the US-UK axis against his annexation, his secularising ambitions bore every mark of being counter-productive.

That this political style should be compared with that of the Church of England and its heads in the English eighteenth century shows a certain bankruptcy. If such comparisons are to be made, the rule of the Al Sabahs in Kuwait has been far more similar to that of the Hanoverians, and the dissolution of the Kuwaiti Assembly itself might be subjected to Dunning's famous resolution of 1780: the power of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished. The Kuwaiti electorate was comparable, as a proportion of the population, to that in eighteenth century England, and so on and so on.

Nor have Saddam's pronouncements shown any sign of an ideology or a politics which can unite the Arab world - let alone the Islamic or the Third World - on any constructive course. His diplomacy, especially since January 16, has shown a high level of ability at repartee. But the idea that a regime whose arbitrary brutality derives from its misalignment with its non-national base offers a promising future for a Third World partly multinational and partly pre-national is nonsense. If the choice is between a Saddamite path for the Third World and the Pax Americana, then socialists should choose the Pax Americana, hypocritical moralising, crocodile tears, Zionist stranglehold and all - and encourage the most democratic and liberal development of capitalism possible, in the spirit (perhaps more than the letter) of Kennedy's Alliance For Progress.

If Saddam's Iraq is construed purely negatively - though it has no promise in itself, it is nonetheless a bastion against US-dominated world capitalism, that still leaves the problem of what policies should be pursued behind the shield of Baghdad, as well as that of what other shields are available, and could they shelter the social tasks the world needs better than Saddamism? At its most promising, use of Saddam's shield could only uphold Islamic anti-capitalism. What use is that in Latin America, India or most non-Islamic Africa? None at all - indeed, in much of North India it would be worse that US free trade imperialism for both Hindus and Muslims, deepening the already septic communal struggles



stemming from Ayodhya. Leninist anti-capitalism is no longer available.

The only other major force available is made up by the EC and Japan. Neither is prepared to be subservient to the US for ever, and the issue of the war, wherein US imperialism has shown itself unwilling and unable to fund its own activities, marks a further (albeit still an early) stage in the development of freedom from the US yoke. "We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do, we've got the ships, we've got the men, and we've got the begging bowl too" is not the verse to inspire the 'New World Order'. Neither the EC nor Japanese taxpayers nor the US proletariat will tolerate it for long.

In terms of GNP an EC-Japanese Axis is a more than adequate counterweight to the US - indeed to the US-UK axis. In terms of ideology, its organised social capitalism, especially obvious in Germany and Japan but noticeable in most of the continental EC, can sustain a political philosophy more democratic and more socially protective than US *laissez-faire*. It can therefore subsume or at least co-exist with the economically and socially progressive aspects of Islamic ideology, as with those of other non-capitalist or anti-capitalist social forces. Given these two bases, political and military development will ensue within two or three decades, in part because social-democratic capitalist ideology offers a reasonable challenge to US *laissez-faire* and litigiousness - both of which are presently threatening to dominate the world. That challenge is needed, and may be more successful than international Leninism, in putting the US on better behaviour.

Development may give us Eurasia and Eastasia rather than the single anti-American bloc I have envisaged. And for socialists in the UK, the question of the status of the country - Airstrip One of Oceania or an equal part of the EC component - is the most pressing one. But in world terms, a counterpoise to the US is needed, and it can emerge only from some form or other of the EC-Japanese axis. That will impose enormous strains - the development of a multinational EC state is at severe odds with the tasks of economic assistance for the Third World. Without such a counterpoise, neither balance of power nor international law can develop in the world. Herr Genscher (and the Japanese socialists) and perhaps M. Chevènement have shown the way forward.

[Hugh Roberts will reply to Ben Cosin's arguments in our next issue - Ed.]

Reader's Letter: the need for a manufacturing mentality

I read your issue No. 21 with great interest, and particularly the article on City Technical Colleges by Mark Cowling.

The Machine Tool Technologies Association (of which I am a past president and am currently Chairman of its Education and Training Committee) has taken a very keen interest in these colleges and has indeed provided support and encouragement in various forms.

Why should an engineering association be providing such support and interest, and what are the attractions of CTCs?

Let me begin outside the classroom by describing the current difficult position of machine tools and manufacturing industries in the UK. It is very very slowly becoming clear to government (I think!) that manufacturing has a role to play in our economy. Since the mid-1980s Britain has been in manufacturing deficit [*i.e. we have imported more manufactured goods than we export*] and now our oil and invisible trade are not in a position to counter this. Is this surprising? Not really if you consider that the world trade in manufactured goods is four times as large as the world trade in services. Making things is the way that every successful industrial competitor of ours has created a healthy economy. Consider also that the current UK consumption of machine tools (the heart of all manufacturing processes) is about one billion pounds per annum; Germany invests at three times that rate; Japan invests four times as much. It is hardly surprising that our manufacturing industry, using and purchasing fewer advanced technology machines, can not keep pace with the development of our industrial competitors. What is the result? Better quality goods produced faster and more cost effectively by our industrial competitors are more attractive to the British consumer who is happy to purchase them.

How do you stop this trend? Well, an immediate government answer is to raise interest rates to a level where the consumers curtails their spending and this consequently reduces the importation of goods. But hang on?! What then happens to the manufacturing investment that is so sorely needed? Industry has to borrow at these same high interest rates, and since it already has to contend with the notoriously short pay-back requirements imposed on it by the City, Industry too has to cut back its investment plans. And where will we all be when interest rates finally come down (as of course they will)?

Consumers will demand products; British manufacturers will not have invested in the equipment to make it and we will again start to suck in imports. (I think we've been here before!)

We have to create a manufacturing mentality in this country that absolutely understands the vital nature of making things and of the necessity to take a long term view of the investment process. The backers of Japanese businesses understand quite clearly that investment today may only bring rewards in many years time. What they clearly have successfully realised is that farsighted investments leads to market position (or even market control) and long-term profitability.

There is no doubt in my mind that one of the leaders in this re-creation of a manufacturing mentality and industrial infrastructure must be the government. High interest rates and nine Secretaries of Trade and Industry in the twelve years don't exactly imbue you with the sense that encouragement of manufacturing is a high priority!

How can we in industry help to change this infuriatingly untackled situation? My Education and Training Committee has in its own small way set itself the task of establishing a better awareness of engineering and industry amongst students at primary, secondary, and tertiary level. We seek to influence those who could be interested in our industry and its challenges, and to gain the approbation of those who will go elsewhere of the vital nature of our task and thus ensure their vocal support, financial encouragement, and professional respect for the engineering community.

When we were invited to visit the first CTC at Kingshurst Solihull, we were very impressed. There can be no argument that they have received funds that have enabled them to ensure marvellous facilities for their students. It is also true that, free from encumbrances that many secondary schools have to labour under they have been able in innovative ways and with tremendous parental support (much as Mark Cowling described in his article) to produce motivated, technically orientated and aware students who are not only eminently employable but will ensure a quality workforce that is a major feature of Japanese and German organisations. We consider that our financial contribution to this CTC, albeit small, was a sign that we supported much that was good in this initiative and that our industry cared very much about the education process and about our future workforce. (Incidentally, my understanding is that

many other schools in the Solihull area have recognised the challenge and are now looking to offer parents in their area the sort of educational package which is obviously attractive. I would be interested to know if the same is now true in Cleveland despite the local authority's politically influenced stance.)

Meantime, we have established further specific school-industry links with a variety of secondary schools (including incidentally the Djanogly CTC in Nottingham to promote our aims. Clearly the CTCs have done much right (better than those other private institutions, the Public Schools) and for this they deserve credit and copying. I can think of few political initiatives over the many years of democracy that have brought exclusive goodness with them; I can think of many which have on balance been positive and I think the CTCs are one. A major investment in the educational and manufacturing infrastructure of our nation can not be wrong, and however it is brought about, we welcome it. Without it, we will assuredly not be able to afford the quality of life for all to which we aspire.

Your sincerely
Stephen G. Panke

Mark Cowling comments:

This letter is interesting in that it shows that British manufacturers feel generally let down by the economic management and technical training provided by the Conservatives, a sentiment to which Labour can and should give a friendly response, one part of which might be the adoption of the attitude to CTC's proposed in my article. On the specific question of whether Cleveland has started to respond to the Macmillan CTC by imitation, readers may recently have noticed some adverse press comment about standards, discipline and staff morale in the schools originating from the Chair of the Cleveland Education Committee. The comments are basically incorrect, i.e. there is every sign that the College and its staff are essentially thriving. The comments may be seen as another symptom of the bitterness felt within the Cleveland LEA at the Conservatives' imposition of the school on the area. There was some local pride in the god links already established between secondary schools and industry, and there is a perverse satisfaction in the way ICI has continued to sponsor local schools but does not support the College. Thus there is currently no imitation as found in Solihull; however, Kingshurst has been running one year longer than Macmillan. Given that 40% of eligible children applied to go to Macmillan last year there seems every reason to expect imitation to break out in due course.

Notes on the News

by Madawc Williams

Gulf war - forgotten lies

World capitalism is based on an arbitrary and accidental division of wealth. Kuwaitis by their own efforts would have remained as poor as Yemenis or Sri Lankans - perhaps even poorer, since they had fewer marketable skills. But because there was oil under their own little patch of desert, they suddenly became rich. Without oil, Britain would have allowed the miniature Gulf states to go the way of the Princely states of India - most of which were much larger and more serious affairs. The miniature Gulf states have served to keep oil wealth separated from the Muslim and Arab poor. Most oil revenues come right back to the West, one way or another.

In the seven months from August 1990 to February 1991, the governments of Britain and America followed policies that inevitably led to suffering and death for huge numbers of Iraqi and Kuwaiti Arabs. At no point were they interested in reducing such sufferings. Most Iraqi government brutality to Kuwaitis was due to the reasonable belief that the West was going to use its full power against them no matter what they did.

When the Iraqis failed to do anything sufficiently nasty, extra deeds could always be invented and paraded as facts by the media. Remember the shocking matter of the Iraqis stealing incubators from babies. *This never happened: it is a complete lie.* **The Guardian** (March 2nd) carried a report by David Beresford, who investigated the matter in the place where it was supposed to have happened, and found that no one there knew anything about the matter.

"I left the guided tour and went in search of the 'incubator story', probably the most famous of the Kuwait atrocity tales, given credence by President Bush himself: that Iraqis had thrown newborn babies out of incubators, which they then stole, leaving them to die.

"The incident is meant to have happened at the al-Sabah maternity hospital... the Iraqis had not dumped any babies, or stolen incubators, and the staff had no idea where the story had originated. The only baby she personally had lost to the war had been a boy who died when a bomb destroyed the local power station... the chief surgeon pointed out that he, too, had suffered from the war, his wife having been killed in an allied rocket attack on the hostel block for doctors and nurses."

Where did the story come from, and why did Bush give it credibility? The Kuwaiti exiles certainly issued a number of stories that were almost immediately exposed as false. Iraqi deserters in helicopters. Paratroopers freeing Kuwait City, long before any real Allied troops got there. Most of these stories were ignored by the American authorities, and in the long run even the press learned not to trust them. Yet President Bush used the story of the Kuwaiti babies robbed of their incubators, promoting a total fiction as if it was an incontrovertible truth. US Presidents are uniquely well-placed to be well informed, and all of their public statements are the product of very careful preparation. It is inconceivable that Bush did not know that the story was, at the very least, unproven. In view of his other actions, it is all too probable that he was happy to use the case of fictitious dead babies to start a process in which many real babies were to die.

The non-fictitious slaughter by Iraqis of Kuwaiti suspects and opponents in the last days of the occupation was avoidable. Iraqis could have been allowed to withdraw peacefully under neutral supervision, under the Soviet peace plan that Iraq accepted and America rejected.

"The Americans skillfully transmuted a negotiable Soviet proposal into an ultimatum Iraq could not accept." These words come, not from a **Bevin Society** publication, but from that most intelligent of establishment publications, **The Economist**. (March 2nd, p 21). In the same issue they also say *"Mr Hussein must have known last August that he would not get away with his invasion without some sort of international reprimand. But, brimming with oil and armed to the hilt, he had reason enough to suppose that the world would eventually swallow its disapproval and accept a fait accompli"* (page 15). Also *"Britain's bill for the Gulf war now looks like being remarkably small: it could even turn into a profit... Assuming the February 28th cease-fire holds, the human cost has been mercifully limited, too"* (page 30).

There are still no very certain figures for total Arab deaths. The Saudis reckoned 85,000 Iraqi soldiers dead. The Kuwaitis, who have a long history of lying, reckoned 33,000 of their own people dead or missing or prisoners. An unknown number of Iraqi civilians died in the bombing of Iraqi cities. When **The Economist** says that *"the human cost has been mercifully limited, too"*, it reveals its actual feelings about Arabs. Nowhere in its whole assessment of the Gulf Campaign, a brilliant success for

policies that **The Economist** had been supporting for the previous few months, is there anything said about the appalling human cost of the war to the Iraqi and Kuwaiti Arabs. This is entirely consistent with a whole line of Anglo-American feeling. Retrospectives on the Vietnam War almost all concentrate on the cost to America. The vastly higher price paid by the Vietnamese, both enemies who were bombed and burnt and 'friends' who were ruthlessly abandoned in the final collapse, is hardly ever taken into account.

In the rest of the media, a more humane line needs to be taken. Greedy, cold-blooded thinking is to be encouraged among the 'top people', the people **The Economist** tries to cater for. The rest are supposed to act rather more emotionally. The very real sufferings of some Kuwaitis were paraded to mask the much greater suffering of very large numbers of Iraqis. And no one was allowed to realise that both sets of suffering were due to Bush and Thatcher deciding to invent and enforce a new set of rules back in August 1990.

British troops were heroic in the Falklands: they fought on a civilised basis, suffered losses, killed no Argentinean civilians and bombed no cities. The Falklands War was a proper war, where enemy lives were treated as being of some value. The 'war' against Iraq was much more like a massacre, most of it carried out by US aircraft who attacked almost everything that moved, including in one case a British military vehicle.

Histories of the Gulf war are quite noticeably not rolling off the presses, in the way that did after the Falklands victory. And serious analysis would stir up too many forgotten lies, lies that the whole of the mainstream media were involved in propagating.

Popes and Godfathers

The Godfather Part III has been disliked by the critics, perhaps because it stresses a theme that was a fairly minor one in the two previous films - the lack of any clear line between gangsterism and the 'respectable' world of business, politics and the church hierarchy. Indeed, 'Godfather' Michael Corleone runs into trouble when he tries to move completely into 'respectable' business and finds that the people he is dealing with are worse crooks than he is. The fictional situation intentionally copies the Vatican Bank scandal, which has not yet been fully cleared up, and may very well never be resolved while the Vatican

Archives remain closed.

The Vatican, in its history, has generally been much more a continuation of the Roman Empire than a continuation of the original gatherings of Greek-speaking and Aramaic-speaking members of the powerless underclass in the Roman world. The original Christians had no notion of politics, because they had no power and because they were in any case expecting the world to end quite soon. When the Latin-speaking half of the Roman Empire vanished, the Church was left behind as the most substantial remnant of that world, which continued a modified form of its politics. This continued up to, and beyond, the organisation of the rest of Europe into either nation-states or strong centralised Empires. And the poor Italians had their national development spoiled by the presence and interference of the Papacy. When an Italian state was finally created, there was a long cold war between it and the Papacy. This conflict was finally resolved by Mussolini, who established Church-State relationships in Italy on a basis that continues down to the present day.

Sicily was a particular victim of Papal policies. There was a time when it was the most advanced and cultured part of Italy. It was blighted by a parasitic aristocracy which the Papacy backed. The original Mafia existed as a sort of rudimentary middle class between the aristocracy and the exploited peasantry. Mussolini tried to get rid of them as obstacles to progress. The United States helped them recover and rise to unprecedented power, by making use of them, as a matter of short-term convenience, during the invasion of Sicily and Southern Italy in World War Two. The United States also helped perpetuate the unbroken run of Christian Democratic power in Italy since then, using all of its power to keep the Communist Party of Italy out of any share in government.

The Mafia were a minor part of this power-structure, dependent on political friends. Some parts of the Mafia seem to have got too greedy and ambitious, as well as getting very deeply involved in the destructive trade of drug-trafficking. Possibly they supposed themselves to be the sort of autonomous force that most gangster films portray them as - the **Godfather** films being an exception by insisting on the ties between the underworld and the rich and powerful. Ironically, this group were called the Corleonesi, very similar to the fictional Corleones of the **Godfather** films. Their behaviour was very different - the Corleonesi took on the Italian state, and have naturally been

hammered. But it is very probable that Italian politicians still have many links with parts of the Mafia whose ambitions are modest and acceptable.

Undemocratic left-overs

The Communist Party of Great Britain, with a singular lack of judgment, has decided to vanish by renaming itself the Democratic Left. Anyone who has had dealings with the CP over the years will know what a total joke that name is. Back in the days before Khrushchev the CP were the local representative of the crude, repressive but often highly effective World State that Stalin & Co. were trying to build. There was a real popular link between this growing World State and large numbers of working people, as well as any number of disaffected intellectuals. It was a democracy of sorts, and one that looked set to remake the world along the lines originally envisaged by Lenin.

Khrushchev destroyed this democracy in 1956. He created as much confusion among Communists as the Pope would create among Catholics if he were to say that Jesus was not after all the Son of God. In no sense did Khrushchev encourage the rank and file of World Communism to start thinking seriously about their own past. Some people mistakenly saw him as meaning this - the Hungarians, for instance, whom he crushed with tanks later on in 1956. The reality was that Khrushchev threw the movement into chaos by arbitrarily changing the beliefs that millions of ordinary people had built their lives around.

After 1956, there was no logical reason for the Communist Party of Great Britain to go on existing. It had based itself on the notion that correct ideas came from Moscow. Changes of line like the Nazi-Soviet pact had caused problems, but they could be understood as cunning manoeuvres that had ended up both saving the Soviet Union and enormously expanding its power. But for Moscow in 1956 to suddenly say that it had been telling a complete pack of lies for the past 30 or more years created an intolerable dilemma for believers in the Moscow Line. Some True Believers went on considering all of this as another subtle manoeuvre which would be justified by history. But events were to prove them wrong. 1956 was actually the peak of World Communism's power. Successes like the first ventures into space and the Cuban Revolution could not make up for the realisation that truth was whatever the ruling clique in Moscow might choose to consider truth, without either traditions or popular will counting

for anything.

Other options were open in the 1950s. Instead of trying to cosy up to the Pope and to the United States, the post-Stalin leadership could have tried seriously to heal the split between Communists and Socialists that Lenin had created. I'm not suggesting that Lenin should have been denounced, although a move away from Lenin-idolisation would have been a good idea. In any case, a lot of the success of Western European socialists was based on the visible and menacing presence of the Communist alternative that led serious conservatives to see reforms as unavoidable. It could simply have been said that the conflict had been 'superseded' and that the two political traditions could now reunite.

Sadly, both Khrushchev and the various CPs throughout the world preferred to condemn their own history but hang on to everything that had been accumulated during the Stalin era. It was bound to end badly. Left politics since 1956 have been blighted by the power and presence of a confused and disintegrating Communist movement. Hopefully, the 'Democratic Left' now lacks the power to do any more blighting.

The Poll Tax and the Hesel-tax

After Thatcher's downfall, Heseltine was put in charge of looking into Poll Tax and replacing it with something. At the end of several months, he stood up in the House of Commons and said that it was indeed to be replaced with something. Only he couldn't say exactly what sort of something. Poll Tax is to be replaced by an indefinable something - Louis Althusser might have called it a Constituted Blank. As I write, a precise definition of the something has been promised but not yet delivered. But since this indefinable something is absolutely central to the future of local government, it needs a clear label. So let's just call it the Hesel-tax.

Imagine two families. The Smith household - a married couple with two grown-up children who can't yet afford to leave home - live in a flat costing £30,000. The Jones household are much richer - they live in a £120,000 house. Assuming that they live in the same borough, and that ratable values are roughly in line with property prices, the Jones household would have paid four times as much in Rates as the

Smith household. Under the Poll Tax, there would have been a drastic shift from poor to rich - the Smith household would be paying twice as much.

Under the Hesel-tax, we have - what? We have a mix of personal and property taxation, but what sort of mix? If it ends up with the Jones household paying three times as much as the Smith household, it is very nearly 'son of rates'. If it ends up with the Smith household paying 50% more than the Jones household, then it is 'son of poll tax'. If they were to end up paying the same, then it would be a blend that was closer to Poll Tax than Rates, and if the Jones paid twice as much as their impoverished neighbours it would be closer to Rates than to Poll Tax.

The voters want something that is more or less Rates. The majority of the Tory MPs and activists want Poll Tax and will settle for something that is almost the same. Major was in no position to defy either the voters or the hard core of his own support. Thus we got the Hesel-tax. Heseltine must know he has come up with an absurdity. There is

good reason to suppose that he wanted to be rid of the Poll Tax principle completely. He has however gone along with the fudge, and therefore the Hesel-tax can only bear his name.

Labour ridicules the Hesel-tax, which is indeed ridiculous. Sadly, the Hesel-tax also bears an uncanny resemblance to the hybrid tax that is currently the official Labour alternative to Poll Tax. Labour should have stuck with supporting the Rates, as the least bad local taxation system. For that matter, it is not yet too late. Kinnock, in the debate, did call for a return to rates. But how much more impressive Labour's front bench would have looked if they had all along been saying that rates were the least painful form of local taxation and needed only minor reforms.

L&TUR No. 5 had a front-page article by Jack Lane that said just that, back at the start of 1988 when most politicians refused to consider the notion. Possibly if we raised our price to £50 an issue and called ourselves a think-tank, Labour's front bench might then deign to notice us.

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The United Nations

The following resolution was adopted at a Bevin Society Conference on 7th April, 1991:

1. The United Nations is not, and could not be while the Veto system exists, a body through which international law might be established.
2. The United Nations was established for the purpose of ensuring a permanent dominance in world affairs of the three major military powers of 1945 and two other states which they chose to include in their world oligarchy. Economic power then coincided with military power, but it no longer does. The great military powers are now in relative economic decline. The divergence of economic and military power, combined with the United Nations system which gives priority to the military power of its founders, is a fundamental source of disorder in the contemporary world.
3. The Gulf War was not a law enforcement operation. It has not made the world safer. Its effect has been to blight the prospect that the ending of the Cold War would usher in a generation in which the world would develop through peaceful competition led by two great economic powers which are committed against militarism.
4. The state of Kuwait is a British imperialist contrivance developed for a purpose which has nothing to do with the welfare of the people of Arabia. Britain first cultivated the al-Sabah clan in order to get a foothold against the Ottoman Empire, then for the purpose of restricting Saudi development, and finally constituted the clan into a state for the purpose of separating Arab oil from the Arab people and keeping it under Western control. What makes the despotism of the Emir despicable is not the lack of democracy for Kuwait nationals, but the restriction of nationality. In the era of the League of Nations, nationality was declared by the International Court to be the inherent right of all who were subject to a state. People born in and long-term residents of states should have the option of citizenship. In Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990, less than 40% of those who lived in the state, and by their work enabled it to function, had Kuwaiti nationality. And 'liberated' Kuwait, being under some Western pressure to make democratic gestures, has announced a programme of halving the population as a preliminary measure.
5. The United Nations decided to restore this despotism by force, at immense cost to the civilian population of Iraq, after Iraq had made clear its willingness to negotiate a withdrawal, while continuing to turn a blind eye to the Indonesian annexation of East Timor and the slaughter of up to half its people, despite a Security Council resolution admitting a right of self-determination in the people of East Timor. This demonstrates that the United Nations is not only not a body which establishes law, but is a body which fosters disorder in the world.
6. The United Nations fostered the rebellions which occurred at the end of the Gulf War, reckoning by this means to overthrow the Ba'ath Government at the cost of only Iraqi lives. When the Ba'ath Government, despite the immense damage done by United Nations bombing to its apparatus of State, managed to reorganise and to suppress the rebellions, the United Nations washed its hands of all responsibility in the matter, but shed crocodile tears of humanitarian concern.
7. The United Nations is likely to constitute an ongoing danger to peace and progress in the world unless it is compelled to reform. The essential reforms are an abolition of the Veto and the development of the Security Council into a body representative of the General Assembly.
8. The Security Council should still include permanent powers, but without a Veto. Representation should be a balance between power and numerical democracy. America, Russia, China, India, and Japan should have permanent seats. And either the EC should have a permanent seat, or Germany should have a seat as well as Britain and France. Motions to wage war should require a heavily weighted majority. And disputes between states likely to lead to war - such as the Kuwaiti provocations of Iraq early in 1990 - should be made subject to compulsory arbitration, also by a weighted majority.
9. Amendment of the United Nations Charter is subject to Veto. Reform is therefore unlikely unless some powerful states threatened to withdraw, if the Veto is not abolished. But a dissolution of the UN would be preferable to continuing it in its present form. It really is time World War 2 was ended.

Explanatory Note:

The official terminology of the United Nations is fundamentally at variance with ordinary language in many respects. The very name "*United Nations*" is a misnomer. It is not composed of nations, but of states. It can take no cognizance of nations in the ordinary sense, but officially presumes all states to be nations. Nationality is defined as follows in a 1930 decision of the International Court: "*A man's nationality is a continuing legal relationship between the sovereign state on the one hand and the citizen on the other. The fundamental basis of a man's nationality is his membership of an independent political community*" (See *Introduction To International Law* by J. G. Starke. Butterworths, 1989, p340). Nationality is membership of a state, on this view, though it does not necessarily involve the right to vote in electing the Government of the state. The Government of Kuwait denied nationality in this sense to over sixty per cent of the inhabitants of Kuwait. There were about 700,000 Kuwaiti nationals, of whom about 50,000 had the vote on the rare occasions when elections were held. And there were about a million people who were officially decreed not to be nationals, even though many of them were born in the state. This was in gross violation of the International Court ruling that, while a state may deny democratic political rights to an individual member of it, it may not deprive him of nationality.